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HANDS-ON POLICIES

Empowering the growth of China's private sector



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Cover Design: Wang Yajuan

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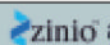
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EDITOR'S DESK

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Private Ventures, Collective Growth

At a symposium on private enterprises held in Beijing on February 17, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized the pivotal role of the private economy in driving scientific and technological innovation, as well as industrial upgrading.

He called for stimulating private enterprises through policy support and institutional guarantees.

The symposium was yet another important gathering focused on private enterprises, following a similar meeting Xi had proposed and chaired in November 2018, highlighting his strong commitment to the private sector's development.

In China, private enterprises account for over 92 percent of all businesses, and they make up more than 92 percent of the country's hi-tech companies. This highlights the central role private businesses play in driving the country's economic growth, establishing the private economy as an essential part of the nation's economic landscape.

As China moves toward high-quality development and modernization, the private sector is poised for new opportunities and growth. This is an ideal time for private enterprises and entrepreneurs to fully utilize their capabilities.

This year is the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period and is an

important time for further deepening reforms across the board. The overall economy is currently facing new challenges, and the private sector is experiencing some difficulties.

The recent symposium on private enterprises has sent a clear message to private businesses and entrepreneurs. It encourages them to better understand the government's policies, boost their confidence and embrace innovation.

Governments at all levels in China are prioritizing the implementation of policies and measures to support the growth of the private economy. These initiatives aim to eliminate barriers that prevent equal access to production resources and ensure fair competition in the market. Additionally, they seek to protect the rights and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance with the law.

Entrepreneurs are encouraged to strengthen and expand their businesses while operating with integrity and transparency. They should actively fulfill their social responsibilities and foster harmonious labor relations. By doing so, they can make meaningful contributions to the healthy development of the private economy and promote high-quality economic and social progress. **BR**



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A GREEN GIANT

China's AS700D electric manned airship during its maiden flight in Jingmen, Hubei Province, on February 21.

The successful maiden flight represented a major advancement in China's green aviation for the low-altitude economy sector. Announced by the Aviation Industry Corp. of China, the airship's developer, this milestone validates the technical maturity of the independently developed AS700D and provides a technological foundation for future electric airships.

Its safety and stability make it well-suited for low-altitude sightseeing, aerial advertising, urban security and emergency rescue operations.



Ride the Future!

A prototype of the CR450 bullet train undergoes testing in Beijing on February 25. The CR450 prototypes, designed to reach a test speed of up to 450 km per hour and an operational speed of 400 km per hour, were unveiled in Beijing at the end of last year. Once in commercial service, they will become the fastest high-speed trains in the world, surpassing the current CR400 model, which operates at 350 km per hour.

Cyberspace Law Enforcement

China has strengthened efforts to clean up its cyberspace environment, with the Cyberspace Administration of China on February 25 announcing that over 10,000 illegal websites had been shut down in 2024.

Last year, cyberspace authorities nationwide prioritized combating violations in cyberspace, including infringement on minors' rights, online violence and the spread of disinformation. As part of this initiative, they summoned representatives from 11,159 websites and online platforms to talks, and issued warnings or fines to 4,046 that were found to have committed related violations.

They also focused on improving the online business environment, and penalized websites, online platforms and online accounts disseminating illegal

information or disrupting online communication.

Additionally, the cyberspace authorities strengthened law enforcement in areas such as cybersecurity, data security and personal information protection, and rectified violations closely related to people's daily lives, including QR code-enabled consumption and facial recognition.

Eliminating Air Pollution

China aims to basically eliminate severe air pollution by 2025, the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, Li Tianwei, an official with the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, said on February 24.

To reach this goal, China will ramp up efforts in pollution control and emission reduction, improve its air quality forecasting and early warning systems, and enhance co-ordinated management of PM2.5

and ozone pollution, Li told a press conference.

In 2024, China's air quality continued to improve. The average concentration of PM2.5 in cities at or above the prefecture level was 29.3 micrograms per cubic meter, a year-on-year decrease of 2.7 percent.

The proportion of days with good air quality reached 87.2 percent, up by 1.7 percentage points year on year.

In China, mobile sources considerably contribute to air pollutant emissions, accounting for roughly 60 percent of the national nitrogen oxides and 24 percent of the volatile organic compounds.

To effectively tackle mobile source air pollution, the development and revision of relevant standards must be expedited, the official said, adding China plans to introduce new emission standards that align with global best practices.

China will also boost the

share of new-energy vehicles and machinery in airports, ports and logistics parks, and accelerate the transition of long-haul bulk cargo transportation from road to rail and waterways, Li said.

Disney Vocational Training

Shanghai Disney Resort on February 21 launched a vocational training program with local partner schools to provide students with immersive learning and training opportunities based on its operational experience.

The program, the Shanghai Disney Dream Vocational Campus, is a milestone in Shanghai Disney Resort's commitment to cultivating talent and providing graduates with diverse employment opportunities while supporting the evolving demands of the tourism industry, Shanghai Disney Resort said.

An initial virtual campus will be launched through the Shanghai Institute of Tourism, with internal admissions of approximately 100 students beginning in March.

"Shanghai Disney Resort is committed to nurturing the next generation of tourism professionals by equipping students with practical skills, real-world industry knowledge and employment opportunities early in their careers," said Andrew Bolstein, senior vice president of operations at Shanghai Disney Resort.

Students enrolled in the program will be offered a co-created curriculum, practical training programs and internship opportunities at the resort.

Water Diversion Project

China's South-to-North Water Diversion Project, the largest of its kind globally, has delivered over 70 billion cubic meters of water through its middle route since it

started full operation in December 2014.

According to the China South-to-North Water Diversion Corp., the massive water transfer project has become a lifeline for 26 major cities and over 200 counties, benefiting approximately 114 million residents in Beijing, Tianjin, as well as Hebei and Henan provinces.

The impact has been particularly pronounced in Beijing, where diverted water now accounts for nearly 80 percent of the capital's urban water supply.

The mega water diversion project channels water over long distances from the country's water-rich south to its northern regions, where hundreds of millions once endured "absolute water scarcity" as defined by United Nations standards.

Wild Animal and Plants Protection

China's forestry and grassland authority on February 21 said it will launch specific actions in the spring to protect birds and crack down on illegal activities that negatively impact wildlife resources.

China has continuously strengthened its protection of wild animals and plants in recent years, and its populations of major protected wild animal and plant species have shown an upward trend, according to the National Forestry and Grassland

Administration.

The monitored number of overwintering waterbirds in the country reached its highest level in 2024, the administration said, noting the illegal hunting of wild birds and animals still occurs in some places.

The administration will work with other government departments to crack down on acts such as illegal hunting, the illegal trade of birds and the sale of prohibited hunting tools, while enhancing local governments' leadership over the protection of wild animals and plants.

Public Interest Litigation

China's procuratorial authorities have worked to strengthen the protection of the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in public interest litigation, the country's top procuratorate said on February 24.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) told a press conference that in the first 11 months of 2024, procuratorial agencies nationwide had handled 3,318 cases concerning the protection of the elderly, people with disabilities, and female, migrant and new types of workers.

Prosecutors have targeted several prominent social problems and key areas that had infringed upon people's interests,



Welcoming the World

Foreign tourists prepare for their entry into Tianjin on February 25. The cruise ship *Europa 2*, carrying over 460 passengers from Germany, Australia, Austria, and other countries and regions, arrived at Tianjin International Cruise Home Port that day. *Europa 2* was the first cruise ship to visit a Tianjin port this year.

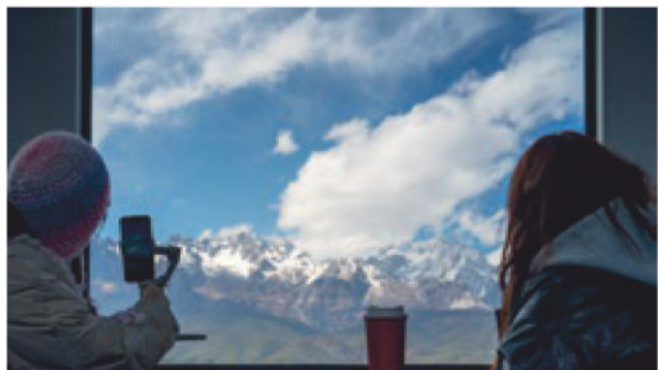
such as employment discrimination against women, unlicensed elderly care institutions, and problems regarding employment security funds for the disabled, the SPP stated.

Protection of the rights and interests of vulnerable groups has been a major focus of public interest litigation in China. More than 140,000 public interest litigation cases were handled between January and November last year, according to the SPP.

The SPP added that in the process of handling public

interest cases, procuratorial authorities have prioritized problems related to the people's pressing concerns, including ecological protection, drug and food safety, personal information protection and telecommunications fraud.

In the first 11 months of last year, 55,000 cases of ecological and resource protection were settled, while 23,000 cases involving drug and food safety and 4,848 cases concerning personal information protection were handled, according to the SPP.



Snow-Capped Splendor

Tourists enjoy the snow-capped mountain scenery in Yunnan Province while aboard a sightseeing train on February 25. The train, which connects Lijiang Ancient Town to Yulong Snow Mountain, was launched on February 12 and has quickly become a new tourism hotspot in northwest Yunnan.

Marine Economy

China's marine economy achieved a milestone in 2024, with its gross ocean product (GOP) exceeding 10 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion) for the first time, according to data from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The GOP is a measure of the economic value generated by the oceans and their resources.

An annual report released by the ministry on February 24 showed that China's GOP had reached 10.54 trillion yuan (\$1.5 trillion) in 2024, marking a 5.9-percent increase from the previous year, while demonstrating robust growth across multiple sectors.

Marine manufacturing emerged as a key driver, accounting for over 30 percent of the total GOP. Notably, the service sector was the largest contributor to the marine economy in 2024, contributing 59.6 percent of the total GOP. Tourism showed strong recovery signals, with cruise travel experiencing a noteworthy

uptick in popularity.

Offshore wind power entered a new phase of scaled development, as annual power generation grew by nearly 30 percent year on year.

The report also highlighted substantial growth in marine development projects last year. In 2024, authorities approved 4,123 new sea and island utilization projects covering 263,000 hectares—with total investments of 1.07 trillion yuan (\$148 billion).

These figures represent year-on-year increases of 70 percent, 6.9 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively, supporting major offshore oil, gas and wind power projects.

Foreign Trade

Private enterprises remained the leading category of foreign trade operators in China for a sixth straight year in 2024, according to the General Administration of Customs of China.

These achievements include the number of private enterprises

that conducted import-export activities surpassing 600,000 for the first time, reaching 609,000 last year. Private enterprises also emerged as the country's largest traders of hi-tech products, with their share rising by 3 percentage points to 48.5 percent of total hi-tech trade in 2024.

Additionally, private firms for the first time accounted for more than half of the country's consumer goods imports, with their share climbing 2.8 percentage points to 51.3 percent—exceeding 60 percent in categories such as cosmetics and fruit.

Private enterprises continued to lead the country's foreign trade with transactions totaling 24.33 trillion yuan (\$3.4 trillion) last year, posting an 8.8 percent year-on-year increase and contributing 55.5 percent of the country's total foreign trade value.

Meanwhile, foreign-invested companies recorded 12.8 trillion yuan (\$1.8 trillion) in trade last year, an increase of 1.5 percent, with momentum picking up in

the second half of 2024. State-owned enterprises contributed 6.61 trillion yuan (\$911 billion) to foreign trade, playing a pivotal role in importing strategic commodities, including grain and energy resources.

The total number of companies with import-export activities across private, foreign-invested and state-owned sectors reached a record high of nearly 700,000 in 2024.

Green Electricity

The National Energy Administration (NEA) issued 231.2 million green electricity certificates (GECs) in January, a 225-percent increase year on year.

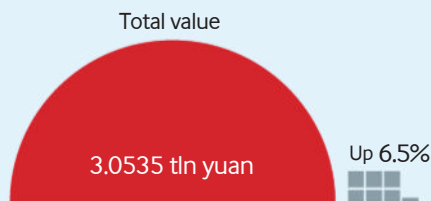
In the month, the newly issued GECs, representing renewable energy production, included 94.74 million from wind power—about 40 percent of the total—81.82 million from hydropower, and 39.43 million from solar power.

As of late January, China had cumulatively issued 5.19 billion GECs, according to the NEA. GECs are the sole proof of

NUMBERS

China's Service Outsourcing Industry in January-December 2024 (All growth rates are y.o.y.; \$1=7.17 yuan as of February 27)

Service outsourcing contracts inked by firms in China



Executed contract value



Offshore service outsourcing contract value



Executed contract value



the environmental attributes of renewable energy power in China and serve as the only certificate for verifying renewable energy production and consumption, according to related rules.

In January, 53.1 million GECs were traded nationwide. Cumulatively, 606.06 million GECs had been traded by the end of January.

China introduced the green certificate system as a pilot program in 2017. In December 2023, the NEA issued the first batch of GECs after being designated as the authority responsible for GEC management.

Loan Growth

As of the end of the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2024, the balance of loans issued by banking financial institutions to small and micro firms totaled 81.4 trillion yuan (\$11.2 trillion), according to the National Financial Regulatory Administration.

The outstanding loans to small and micro companies with a credit limit of 10 million yuan

(\$1.3 million) or less reached 33.3 trillion yuan (\$4.6 trillion), surging 14.7 percent year on year, data from the administration showed.

The quality of commercial banks' credit assets has remained generally stable. By the end of last Q4, the non-performing loan ratio for commercial lenders stood at 1.5 percent, edging down 0.05 percentage points from the previous quarter.

Cross-Border RMB Use

The People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, will promote the use of renminbi (RMB) in cross-border payments, pricing, investment and financing, aiming to facilitate international trade, investment and financing, according to a statement published on February 20.

The PBC said it will develop the offshore RMB market, leverage the roles of currency swaps and RMB clearing banks, and it pledged to accelerate the construction of Shanghai's status

as an international financial center and enhance Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's status as an international financial center.

By the end of 2024, the RMB's share in global payments ranked fourth, while its share in global trade financing stood at third, indicating a steady rise in the internationalization of the RMB, according to data released at a conference held by the central bank from February 17 to 18.

Tax Deferral

Foreign reinvestment in China benefiting from a preferential policy to temporarily exempt certain profits obtained by overseas investors from withholding income tax saw rapid growth in 2024, data from the State Taxation Administration revealed on February 20.

The total value of reinvestment reached 162.28 billion yuan (\$23 billion) in 2024, a 15-percent increase from the previous year, hitting a record high.

China has previously deferred withholding income tax

on profits that were distributed to overseas investors by resident enterprises in the country and directly reinvested in domestic projects and sectors.

Sovereign Green Bonds

The Ministry of Finance released a framework for sovereign green bonds on February 20, paving the foundation for the country to issue offshore sovereign green bonds and global capital to invest in its green development.

Sovereign green bonds are debt securities issued by a national government to fund projects that have positive environmental benefits.

The funds raised by green bonds under the framework will be allocated to eligible green projects included in the central fiscal budget. The funds are expected to contribute to achieving environmental goals such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, natural resource protection, pollution control, and biodiversity preservation.

Offshore service outsourcing executed contract value

With Hong Kong Special Administrative Region



With the United States
151.47 bln yuan

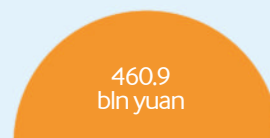


With the European Union
162.5 bln yuan



Offshore service outsourcing executed contract value

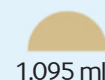
of foreign-funded enterprises



Up 7.1%



By the end of December



new employees had joined China's service outsourcing industry

(Source: Ministry of Commerce)

THIS WEEK **WORLD**



BANGLADESH

Children participate in a memorial observing International Mother Language Day in Dhaka on February 21. Hundreds of thousands of people paid tribute to the country's language movement activists who sacrificed their lives on this day in 1952



GERMANY

Friedrich Merz (center), the chancellor candidate of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU), speaks at the CDU headquarters in Berlin on February 23. The CDU/CSU bloc won the federal election with 28.5 percent of the vote



CUBA

The 25th International Habano Cigar Festival opens in Havana on February 24. The five-day festival kicked off with some 3,300 participants from 110 countries and regions



REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Rescue workers inspect the site of a bridge collapse in Anseong on February 25. Four construction workers were killed and six more were injured



YONHAP

YONHAP



KUWAIT

Police helicopters fly over Kuwait City in celebration of the Independence Day and the Liberation Day on February 25



ISRAEL

A freed Israeli hostage waves to the crowd as he arrived at a medical center in Petah Tikva on February 22. Six Israeli hostages previously held by Hamas were released that day



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ NEW PRESIDENT OF SOUTHEAST UNIVERSITY

Geological resources and engineering expert **Sun Youhong** was recently appointed president of Southeast University, a leading comprehensive university located in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.

Sun, 59, specializes in drilling engineering, focusing on theoretical research, technological innovation and the development of advanced equipment.

He began his career as a lecturer in the Exploration Engineering Department at Changchun Institute of Geology in Jilin Province, which is now known as the College of Earth Sciences at Jilin University. He later became a professor and held managerial positions at several universities. Before assuming the new position, he had served as president of China University of Geosciences Beijing since 2019.

Sun was elected as a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering in 2021.



Rustic Retreats

Economic Daily
February 18

To rent a small cottage in the countryside, wake every day to the crow of roosters and spend all day watching grazing flocks has become a new fad for many Chinese urbanites. In recent years, an increasing number of city dwellers are embracing the trend of rural living by renting idle dwellings in rural areas for a temporary escape from the bustle of urban life.

For only about 1,000 yuan (\$138), people can rent a vacant farmhouse for days, with water, electricity, heating, Internet connection and other daily necessities all provided.

As many rural residents leave their

hometowns for a better life in large cities, many countryside houses have been left vacant, which sometimes leads to entire villages being almost hollowed out. By letting out these idle properties to urban travelers, the owners can not only increase their income but also keep their homes from falling into a state of decrepitude.

This new type of rural homestay offers villagers opportunities to start their own businesses. So far, they have combined house rentals with all kinds of tourist activities, such as fruit picking and farm animal feeding. The trend has also facilitated the unmediated sales of agricultural products by creating a channel via which farmers can directly connect with potential customers.



From Clay to Play

Lifeweek
February 24

Jingdezhen, a city in Jiangxi Province, often referred to as the “Porcelain Capital” of China, has been producing fine porcelain for more than 1,700 years. In recent years, however, it has taken on a new identity as it gradually rises to online stardom. Now, the first

“The most impressive feature of this concept is that it operates on the principle that economic development does not necessarily mean more pollution.”

Clifford Cobb, a renowned U.S. scholar on sustainable development, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, praising the role of the concept that green is gold in advancing China's initiatives to protect the environment and develop green industries

“This is the first time I have witnessed such vast and intricate ice and snow landscapes. China's winter tourism offers endless surprises, and Harbin Ice-Snow World is a must-see destination.”

Jade Breero, a tourist from South Africa, who recently visited Harbin Ice-Snow World, the world's largest ice-and-snow theme park. Located in China's northernmost Heilongjiang Province, the park's 26th edition attracted a record-breaking 3.56 million visitors during its opening season from December 21, 2024, to February 26

thing that comes to mind at the mention of Jingdezhen may not be porcelain, but the many social media memes related to “the speechless Bodhisattva,” a ceramic Buddha statue housed in a museum in the city, or Taoxichuan, an ultra-modern block where market fairs, artist studios and museums are now clustered.

For a long time in history, much of its porcelain production was reserved for the imperial court. Now, artists based in the region have applied the same level of intricate execution to the production of porcelain for daily use and have also invented new patterns and techniques to cater to changing aesthetics. The variety of porcelain one can find in the city has greatly expanded in recent years.

The city also boasts a highly integrated industrial chain that covers all necessary steps in the making of porcelain crafts, as well as a university dedicated to the training of ceramic artists. These factors have attracted ceramic artisans from all across the globe to flock to the region for professional exchanges, which have created a dynamic flow of creativity between this ancient city and the wider global community.

Retirement on the Rails

Guangming Daily
February 17

The Ministry of Commerce and eight other government departments recently co-released a plan to install a fleet of “silver trains” that are specially built for the comfort and safety of seniors. The goal is to roll out a nationwide network of these trains by 2027 to meet the ever-increasing demand for senior-friendly travel options among its rapidly aging population.

Data show that seniors now account for over 20 percent of the total trips made in China and some 64 percent of the country’s weekend travelers.

While the market for this new type

of train is huge, these trains also need to meet much higher standards than those for regular trains. In accordance with government requirements, these silver trains will be equipped with adjustable seats, specially designed bathrooms, luggage assistance services and tailored meal options.

China has been launching special-themed trains to cater to the diverse needs of its travelers. Famous examples include the panda-themed train, designed for tourists visiting several panda attractions in southwest China, and the Silk Road Express, which takes its passengers through some of the country’s most iconic tourist cities.

Building on these past successes, the launch of the silver train will elevate the travel experience for senior passengers.

↓ DIRECTOR WINS SILVER BEAR AT BERLIN

On February 22, **Huo Meng** became the first Chinese mainland filmmaker to win the Silver Bear for best director at the 75th Berlin International Film Festival, receiving the honor for his film *Living the Land*.

The film, written and directed by Huo, captures daily life in 1990s north China through documentary-like cinematography and the authentic use of Henan Province’s local dialect. *Living the Land* is Huo’s third feature film.

Born in Henan’s Zhoukou in 1984, Huo is an associate professor at the Shanghai Film Academy of Shanghai University. He has previously won directorial awards for rural road movie *Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan*, released in 2019. The Shanghai International Film Festival selected him last year for its SIFF YOUNG program, which supports emerging filmmakers with domestic and international film industry resources.



“With the support of a broad base of developers, artificial intelligence (AI) is developing rapidly, particularly as recent breakthroughs in open-source large model technologies and products create new opportunities and space for the development of China’s AI industry.”

Xiong Jijun, Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology at the 2025 Global Developer Conference on February 22

“The experimental results have helped us accurately figure out the pathophysiological mechanisms of Parkinson’s disease, creating a real chance of overcoming a battle that has long seemed insurmountable.”

Wang Jian, Director of the Neurology Department at Huashan Hospital affiliated with Fudan University in Shanghai, as a team from the hospital recently discovered a novel therapeutic target for Parkinson’s disease and identified a potentially effective small molecule drug



COVER STORY

THE PIONEERS OF TRANSFORMATION

China's private sector is highly encouraged to enhance its capabilities

By Tao Xing



President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, attends a symposium on private enterprises in Beijing on February 17

funding ran out, forcing him to use his own money to pay the employees' wages.

Fortunately, they secured new investment in early 2018 and managed to recover. In the second half of 2018, when their products began to be launched, the cash flow started to stabilize. In 2024, Unitree Robotics reportedly held more than 60 percent of the global humanoid robot market, with its post-investment valuation standing at 8 billion yuan (\$1.1 billion).

Wang's story reflects a broader trend in China's private economy, where private enterprises and entrepreneurs focus on strengthening, optimizing and expanding their businesses, in a bid to make strong contributions to advancing modernization.

Associated with hashtags like "born in the 1990s," "private entrepreneur" and "robotics," Wang has been gaining traction on Chinese social media platforms since he attended a high-profile symposium on private enterprises in Beijing on February 17.

"The private sector enjoys broad prospects and great potential on the new journey in the new era. It is a prime time for private enterprises and entrepreneurs to give full play to their capabilities," President Xi Jinping said at the event. He called for promoting the healthy and high-quality development of the private sector.

Against the backdrop of China's ►►

Some 20 years ago, 10-year-old Wang Xingxing watched a documentary that featured a bipedal robot designed by Marc Raibert, now President of U.S.-based robot company Boston Dynamics. That moment planted the seed for his future in innovation. Today, operating in China's private sector, Wang's company, Hangzhou-based Unitree Robotics in Zhejiang

Province, is a globally recognized name in producing high-performance, general-purpose quadruped and humanoid robots.

Wang, CEO of Unitree Robotics, began his entrepreneurial journey at a humble starting point. He had no background at prestigious universities or experience as an executive in a big company. When Unitree Robotics was founded in 2016, it consisted of Wang alone and raised only 2 million yuan (\$275,000) in funding. The outlook of the entire industry was quite gloomy at that time, so he faced many challenges. Between 2017 and 2018, the company's first round of

economic transformation entering uncharted waters, ongoing international uncertainties and the accelerating technological revolution, the symposium has attracted widespread attention.

Innovation and high quality

The symposium emphasized the leading role of the private economy in technological innovation and high-quality development. Six entrepreneurs shared their opinions and advice at the symposium. Among them, five represent the technology industry, namely Ren Zhengfei, founder of information and communications technology infrastructure provider Huawei; Wang Chuanfu, Chairman and CEO of electric vehicle maker BYD; Yu Renrong, Chairman of fab-less image sensor chip maker Will Semiconductor; Lei Jun, Chairman of smart consumer electronics manufacturer Xiaomi; and Wang Xingxing. Liu Yonghao, who also spoke at the event, is chairman of agricultural conglomerate New Hope Group.

Entering the new era, China's economic development has shifted from a stage of high-speed growth to a phase of high-quality development. The development of the "new economy," driven by new technologies, is progressing well and has become a new track for the development of private enterprises. Currently, more than 92 percent of China's hi-tech enterprises are private firms.

After Leng Youbin, Chairman of China Feihe, one of the country's largest suppliers of infant formula, attended the symposium, he told *Global Times* newspaper that the concept of "independent innovation" deeply resonates with him. The milk powder industry may seem like a traditional sector, but its high-quality development is inseparable from technological innovation. To date, Feihe has achieved several world-leading results in fields such as breast milk protein and brain development. These breakthroughs have filled many domestic and international technical gaps and overcome a series of technological bottlenecks.

AutoCity, a company headquartered in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, focuses on autonomous driving vehicles and artificial intelligence (AI)-powered sanitation, with operations in several other cities. "We have approximately 260 employees, with more than 60 percent working in research and development," Holly Guo, Chairman of the company, told *Beijing Review*.

"In the future, we will continue to increase invest-

ment in research and development, focusing on tackling core technological challenges to enhance the competitiveness of our products and services," Guo said, adding the company will continue to establish partnerships with universities and research institutions to promote the transformation of scientific and technological achievements.

"China needs to encourage its traditional Internet giants to leverage their resources and capital to increase investment in foundational technologies, strengthen cooperation with more sci-tech innovation companies, and help cultivate a group of leading enterprises that focus on fundamental research in AI," Shen Yujing, an associate researcher with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said at a seminar on China's AI development in Beijing on February 23.

An indispensable force

The symposium not only featured emerging tech companies such as DeepSeek and Unitree Robotics, but also showcased leading enterprises and entrepreneurs in different fields, including traditional manufacturing and online platforms.

Today, private companies account for more than 92 percent of the total number of enterprises in China, contributes more than 50 percent of the country's tax revenue and over 60 percent of the national GDP. They also provide over 80 percent of urban jobs.

The Zhuxian Town Qifeng Guyuan in Kaifeng, Henan Province, is a large resort area where visitors can experience the charm of ancient town culture, along with a variety of activities including water-based sightseeing, entertainment, shopping, leisure and relaxation. Officially opened in 2016, the resort



Tourists visit the Zhuxian Town Qifeng Guyuan, a large resort area in Kaifeng, Henan Province, in February

also helped reduce local unemployment. “We now employ 220 people, with 90 percent of them being local residents. The average salary is above the average level in the city,” Ye Yaofang, the resort’s General Manager, told *Beijing Review*.

Additionally, in 2024, the import and export volume of the private sector accounted for 55.5 percent of China’s foreign trade, up from 43.3 percent in 2019, maintaining its position as the leading category of foreign trade operators in the country for six consecutive years. By the end of 2023, private companies accounted for 74.2 percent of all industrial enterprises above a designated size, totalling 358,000. In China, industrial enterprises above a designated size refer to those with annual main business revenue exceeding 20 million yuan (\$2.76 million).

The social and economic benefits that have been brought by private enterprises are a result of the consistent implementation of supportive policies in recent decades.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the country are committed to unswervingly consolidating and developing the public sector and unswervingly encouraging, supporting and guiding the development of the non-public sector, Xi, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, said at the symposium.

The Party and the country ensure that economic entities under all forms of ownership have equal access to factors of production in accordance with the law, compete in the market on an equal footing, and are protected by the law as equals, he added.

Practical measures

China has always emphasized the effective protection of the lawful rights



A crowd watches a dance performance by a humanoid robot at the 2024 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai on July 6, 2024

and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance with the law.

For example, the draft private economy promotion law, which adds new provisions prohibiting arbitrary fees and fines on private enterprises, was submitted for a second reading on February 24 at a session of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, China’s top legislature. The first reading took place in December 2024.

The draft law, once adopted, will be China’s first basic law devoted to the development of the private economy, and its main contents include ensuring fair competition, improving the investment and financing environment, supporting technological innovation, and enhancing protection of rights and interests of the private economy.

In addition, different regions are introducing multiple measures to optimize the business environment. For example, service windows for enterprise-related affairs have been set up at government service centers at all levels in Anhui Province.

In Shenzhen, Chengdu in Sichuan Province and Yangzhou in Jiangsu Province where AutoCity operates, local governments offer incentives to technology enterprises, for example, research and development subsidies, tax incentives and financing support. Those

governments have also streamlined several administrative examination and approval processes, according to Guo.

Kaifeng has consistently promoted the development of the culture and tourism sector, introducing incentive policies to encourage the growth of related businesses, according to Ye. “In Kaifeng, more than 90 percent of government services can be accessed online throughout the entire process, and the time required to set up a business has been reduced to just one work day,” he said.

“Local officials regularly hold meetings to listen to entrepreneurs in person. The government also assigns personnel to provide one-on-one support to businesses, helping address their operational difficulties,” Ye added. **BR**

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TOP TIGERS

How do local governments fuel private sector growth? By Zhang Shasha

From globally popular video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, which has garnered a dedicated player base around the world, to DeepSeek, an artificial intelligence (AI) model developed at an impressively low cost that rivals U.S. company OpenAI's ChatGPT, and the perfectly synchronized robotic ensemble performing with precision at this year's China Central Television Spring Festival Gala, a Chinese New Year's Eve extravaganza that aired on January 28—these big tech breakthroughs have risen to prominence one after another, generating massive buzz.

While seemingly unrelated, they do have one thing in common: They are all the creations of private startups based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in east China. The three groundbreaking innovations emerged from Game Science, DeepSeek and UniTree Robotics, respectively.

Recently, they have come to be known by a shared name—"Six Tigers of Hangzhou." The other three members include ManyCore, a spatial intelligence company with over 320 million three dimensional models; BrainCo, whose bionic prosthetic hand ignited the torch at Asian Para Games Hangzhou in 2023; and DEEP Robotics, whose intelligent quadruped robots have been used for inspecting Singapore's power tunnels.

The term "Six Tigers" naturally brings to mind the "Four Asian Tigers"—the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and China's Taiwan and Hong Kong—four economies that experienced rapid growth from the 1960s to the 1990s. The fact that these companies have earned a similar title speaks volumes about their momentum and expansion.

As people applaud the achievements of the Six Tigers, their focus has also shifted to Hangzhou, previously most known as home to e-commerce giant Alibaba. How did this famous "e-commerce capital" evolve into China's thriving hub for hard tech?

Business-friendly governance

In 2018, a recruitment delegation from the Hangzhou Future Sci-Tech City, a government-funded innovation incubator, discovered the startup team behind BrainCo in

a basement in Boston, the U.S.

"We explained our brain-machine interface technology to the delegation and showed them some of the rough prototypes we had at the time, which they recognized and appreciated," He Xiyujin, a partner at BrainCo, told Chinese newspaper *Securities Times*. "We were thrilled. It felt like a talented horse had finally found its jockey."

Although brain-machine interfaces were still a concept found only in science fiction, the delegation immediately realized the potential for future industry growth. They wasted no time in offering an invitation for BrainCo to move to Hangzhou, providing incentives like rent reductions and comprehensive "on-demand" services.

This is why BrainCo, founded in the U.S. in 2015, relocated to Hangzhou in 2018 and established its headquarters there. Over the past decade, BrainCo has evolved into one of the two largest companies in the world in terms of both fund raised and research and development investment in the field of brain-machine interfaces, alongside Elon Musk's Neuralink.

Li Daokui, Director of the Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking at Tsinghua University in Beijing, pointed out on his personal social media that Hangzhou's success can be attributed to its policies in talent acquisition and investment attraction, as well as its thoughtful government services.

Since 2016, Hangzhou has topped the ranking of cities in terms of net talent influx in the country. In 2017, it became the first city to offer subsistence subsidies to college graduates. By 2019, these one-time subsidies had



A visitor poses for a picture with a poster for *Black Myth: Wukong*, a video game developed by Game Science studio based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, at the Third Global Digital Trade Expo in Hangzhou on September 25, 2024

grown, with undergraduates receiving 10,000 yuan (\$1,373), master's graduates 30,000 yuan (\$4,120), and Ph.D. graduates 100,000 yuan (\$13,734).

For entrepreneurial businesses, substantial tax incentives and office rent subsidies are available. Hangzhou once provided up to 100-percent rent subsidies for Game Science over a span of three years. In 2023, it also offered the company tax reductions totaling over 28 million yuan (\$4 million).

As for humanoid robot firm UniTree Robotics, in 2017, after exhausting its funding with no products to show for it, a necessary injection of several hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars from a state-owned platform in Hangzhou helped revive the company, pulling it back from the brink of failure.

In terms of government services, the principle of “no request, no interference” is strictly followed.

While these policies and services are also in place in other cities, what makes Hangzhou stand out? Li mentioned the role of Alibaba, which has infused the city with a strong online industry ecosystem.

As of 2024, the private sector accounted for 28.8 percent of Hangzhou's GDP. This robust foundation provides ample nourishment for startup companies, offering them the resources and support they need to flourish.

Effective models

The “Hefei model” is another example of how local governments empower private enterprises. In 2008, Hefei, capital of Anhui Province in east China, allocated one third of its annual fiscal revenue to attract leading domestic display maker BOE Technology, which was facing losses exceeding 1 billion yuan (\$137 million) at the time. This investment led to the establishment of China's first sixth-generation LCD panel production line. Soon after, supporting companies in areas such as glass substrates, polarizers and module



A staff member from Hangzhou-based DEEP Robotics demonstrates a robot dog in Hangzhou on February 10

manufacturing followed suit. Over time, Hefei gradually built a new, trillion-yuan (over 100-billion-U.S. dollar) display industry chain.

In 2020, Hefei invested 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) to support struggling electric vehicle company NIO, helping it overcome financial difficulties and positioning itself at the forefront of the new-energy vehicle industry. In China, new-energy vehicles refer to vehicles completely or mainly driven by new energy sources, including battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid vehicles and fuel-cell vehicles.

Compared to the traditional approach where governments attract businesses through a favorable business environment and preferential policies, the Hefei model refers to the government using state-owned investment platforms to fund high-quality projects, helping them establish a foothold in the city. Once these projects grow and thrive, the government exits its investments through means such as public stock listings or equity transfers, realizing returns on its investments.

Another defining characteristic of Hefei's investment attraction strategy is to make full use of flagship enterprises' role in forming a localized industrial chain. Last year, Fuyao Glass, the world's largest automotive glass maker based in southeast China's Fujian Province, announced an investment of 5.75 billion yuan (\$793 million) to establish three wholly-owned subsidiaries in Hefei. The company highlighted that Anhui is home to numerous automobile manufacturers like NIO, and this collaboration will help Fuyao Glass leverage the “pull effect” of leading industry players, attracting more up and downstream enterprises.

Drawing inspiration from the successful experiences

of Hangzhou and Hefei, other regions are beginning to explore models tailored to their own strengths.

At a meeting on boosting Guangdong Province's high-quality development on February 5, Huang Kunming, Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Guangdong Provincial Committee, said leading Chinese digital tech company Huawei, which is headquartered in the province's Shenzhen City, is empowering a wide range of industries. He also praised DeepSeek and UniTree Robotics, emphasizing that China is demonstrating “a new momentum of leading the tides of the era,” and Guangdong should strive to take the lead in this competitive race.

On February 6, at Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region's meeting themed on empowering a high-quality economy and fostering new growth drivers, Chen Gang, Secretary of the CPC Guangxi Zhuang Regional Committee, stressed that the AI model developed by DeepSeek has become a global sensation. This, he said, is a testament to the limitless potential of the AI era. He called on Guangxi to “avoid self-deprecation and sluggishness, but instead to position itself at the forefront of this technological wave.”

Li said the Hangzhou model is not one that can be easily replicated. However, other cities can leverage their individual strengths—whether in natural resources or manufacturing industries.

“All cities can learn from the Hangzhou authorities' approach to the economy,” Li added. He highlighted that the appropriate governmental actions—focused on promoting the market economy and providing proper incentives—are key to stimulating a city's growth. **BR**

THE POWER OF PRIVATE INNOVATION

At a symposium on private enterprises in Beijing on February 17, President Xi Jinping underscored the importance of promoting the healthy and high-quality development of the private sector and reiterated the government's supportive policies. In an exclusive interview with *Beijing Review* reporter Zhang Shasha, **Shi Jinchuan**, Chairman of the Center for Research of Private Economy at Zhejiang University, explored the key signals from Xi's speech and the role of the government in supporting the private economy. Edited excerpts of the interview follow:



Beijing Review: What are the key takeaways and signals from Xi's remarks at the symposium?

Shi Jinchuan: The symposium took place at what is a critical historical juncture, as China's economic development enters a new phase. The defining characteristic of this new stage is the focus on advancing Chinese modernization through high-quality development.

In the early stages of China's reform and opening up, which started in 1978, private enterprises were emerging and were mainly engaged in traditional industries, particularly labor-intensive sectors with low added value. As China's economy progresses into a phase of high-quality development, there is a growing emphasis on supporting the private sector to adapt to this trend and make their contribution to it.

The recent symposium highlighted how many participating companies are leveraging market-driven innovation to transition from traditional sectors into hi-tech industries. Even companies rooted in traditional industries, such as agricultural and food company New Hope Group, are leading efforts to modernize through the application of cutting-edge digital technologies.

Traditionally, when discussing

the development of the private sector, there has been little emphasis on its role as a key player in national strategies. In conventional thinking, particularly in the context of strategic emerging industries, state-owned enterprises have been viewed as the natural leaders and drivers of development.

However, at this symposium, President Xi Jinping emphasized that in the new era, the private sector has broad development prospects and immense potential. He encouraged private enterprises to contribute more to promoting scientific and technological innovation. This represents a break from traditional thinking, recognizing that private enterprises can also be pivotal contributors to implementing national strategies.

The rise of six tech pioneers in Zhejiang Province—robotics firms Unitree Robotics and Deep Robotics, AI startup DeepSeek, spatial intelligence company ManyCore, brain-machine interface firm BrainCo and video game developer Game Science, collectively dubbed the “Six Tigers of Hangzhou”—has drawn widespread attention. What's your take on the phenomenon?

From my personal perspective, the development of Zhejiang's economy has been consistently strong. It has been an ongoing effort to find a combination of an effective market and a well-functioning government. These two forces complement each other, creating a foundation where Hangzhou's private economy has undergone major industrial transformation and upgrading over the past two decades. This is precisely why phenomena like the rise of the Six Tigers have emerged.

Specifically, at the beginning of this century, Hangzhou began transitioning from the early to the

mid-to-late stages of industrialization. This shift sparked some debate at that time. Hangzhou's economy had previously been centered on light industries, such as silk making. As the economy progressed into the new century and the industrialization process entered a new phase, there were discussions about the direction this transition should take. Some advocated a shift toward heavy industries, following the successful example of Ningbo, another city in Zhejiang.

At the time, the Hangzhou Municipal Government also considered this approach. However, unlike Ningbo, Hangzhou doesn't have a major port and its petrochemical industry was underdeveloped, suggesting that it might not necessarily adopt the traditional path of transitioning from light to heavy industries.

Xi served as deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhejiang Provincial Committee, acting governor of Zhejiang Province and secretary of the CPC Zhejiang Provincial Committee from 2002 to 2007. During his tenure in Zhejiang, Xi proposed the Double Eight Strategy, a regional economic development initiative that outlines eight measures built upon the province's



A worker assembles parts at a workshop of MinFound Medical Systems Co. Ltd., a private company in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, on February 23, 2024

strengths in eight areas, namely economic structure, geological position, industries, coordinated development of urban and rural areas, ecology, mountain and ocean resources, environment and culture.

Under the strategy, Hangzhou has focused on improving both soft and hard urban infrastructures. This transformation attracted high-end production factors from both domestic and international sources, providing crucial support for the transformation of its private economy.

Building on this foundation, new industries began to emerge. One of the first prominent companies associated with information technology was UTStarcom, which produced the popular Little Smart Wireless Cityphones, before cellular networks became widely accessible. Another was e-commerce giant Alibaba Group. As a result, Hangzhou's private economy began to transition from manufacturing to the new

manufacturing and modern service sectors, pushing its economic development into a new phase featuring the Internet Plus Industrial Development model.

In recent years, Hangzhou has seen a large influx of domestic and international innovative businesses and entrepreneurs. Alongside this, the city has also attracted substantial amounts of capital, particularly private funds. Hangzhou's equity investment institutions have quickly become some of the leading players in the country.

The private sector is a key driver of innovation in Hangzhou, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI). The goal of Hangzhou's next phase of economic development is to cultivate more international leaders in the AI sector and establish Hangzhou as a global AI innovation hub.

Both the rise of the Six Tigers of Hangzhou and the widely discussed “Hefei Model” highlight the vital role the government plays in supporting private enterprises. In your view, what should a healthy relationship between the government and private enterprises be like?

In Hefei, capital of Anhui Province, the government has established several funds, strategically investing in emerging sectors.

This approach has proven to be well-suited to Hefei's regional economic development. In other words, the strength of the private economy in Hefei is still insufficient and private capital is not abundant. Therefore, it relies heavily on an active government to encourage private enterprises to leverage the effective market for investment, entrepreneurship and innovation in emerging strategic fields. Thus, the Hefei model reflects the specific economic development stage and industrial characteristics of the city.

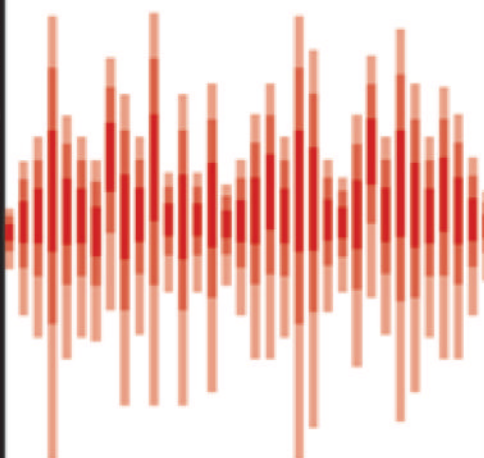
What type of government do private enterprises need? It is essential for the government to provide a fair business environment for economic entities under all forms of ownership, including private enterprises.

The government plays an essential role when market failures or imperfections arise. For example, in areas such as infrastructure development, the provision of public goods, enhancing basic scientific research and ensuring fair income distribution—where the market may not perform adequately—the government must step in to address these gaps.

In the process of advancing innovation in frontier and emerging fields, the government can adopt market-oriented approaches. For example, it can establish industrial funds and collaborate with private investors to jointly support early-stage investments and venture capital markets. This helps stimulate market growth and provides better financial support for innovation in the technology sector and hi-tech enterprises. In essence, the government should develop comprehensive regional economic development plans, offering guidance, encouragement and support to enterprises. **BR**

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The Reasoning Revolution

A shockwave echoed across the artificial intelligence (AI) industry in January as Chinese AI startup DeepSeek launched DeepSeek-R1, an open-source AI model that could match the capabilities of leading American chatbots. At a seminar held at Renmin University of China (RUC) in Beijing on February 23, *Beijing Review* reporter Peng Jiawei spoke to several Chinese scholars to discuss the potential impacts of the rise of DeepSeek on the tech world, global geopolitics and humanity as a whole. Edited excerpts of the interviewees' perspectives follow:

From a technical point of view, apart from the fact that it is open source and requires less than \$6 million worth of computing power, what does DeepSeek say about where generative AI with the ability to create original content is headed?

Zhao Xin (professor at the Gaoling School of Artificial Intelligence, RUC): One notable characteristic of DeepSeek is that, if you select the "DeepThink" mode, it always goes through an extended step-by-step thought process before arriving at a conclusion.

The core of this mode of reasoning is enabling AI to think slowly. This is quite counter-intuitive because, naturally, we would expect an AI chatbot to deliver results as quickly as possible.

To understand why AI is progressing from rapid-fire pre-trained responses to slow reasoning, we must first understand the scaling laws. (Under these laws, the performance of an AI model improves as the size of the training data, model parameters or computational resources increases—*Ed.*) However, the amount of data we can access to train AI models has limits. In fact, almost all of the public data we can access online has already been used to train existing models.

Given that simply scaling up our data size is no longer sufficient for performance improvements, the industry began seeking new growth paths, one of which is to give AI models more time to think.

This extension of thinking time is achieved through reinforcement learning, a branch of machine learning that forces AI agents to learn through trial and error. To understand this process, just imagine that you are being locked in a dark room by your instructor and given a set of problems with only the final results provided. The

only thing you can do is to try different approaches and repeatedly adjust your reasoning until you arrive at the correct answer.

Just as humans employ the slow-thinking modality to tackle complex problems, the act of testing out solutions on its own can unlock new AI capabilities in solving ever-more difficult tasks.

If we look back at history, we see that the three previous industrial revolutions were driven by breakthroughs in basic sciences. Along this line of thinking, the next great leap in generative AI will very likely be its combination with basic sciences. If we were to apply DeepSeek and other slow-thinking models to scientific research, the ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution would be further advanced.

How has the rise of DeepSeek reshaped the global AI race?

Wang Wen (Dean of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, RUC): The emergence of DeepSeek is referred to in the U.S. as a real "Sputnik moment," one that may mark a new AI cold war between the two countries. (In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit Earth, an event that started the space race between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War—*Ed.*)

Indeed, DeepSeek has disrupted

and may profoundly restructure the Western-centric balance of power in the global technology landscape. This achievement has challenged the deeply ingrained belief in the U.S.'s presumed AI supremacy and raises unsettling questions.

The American Government has restricted the export of semiconductor production equipment to China and barred Chinese students from entering the U.S. to study STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Yet it turned out that DeepSeek was able to create a model that rivals the capabilities of leading American chatbots with a team of entirely homegrown talent.

By breaking through the U.S.'s AI hegemony, DeepSeek not only showcases China's technological prowess but also heralds a new technology world order that is less centralized and more inclusive.

The fact that DeepSeek is open source means that other countries that were previously excluded from the AI race can all join the game, not just as competitors but also as collaborators. This approach will help establish a truly multilateral framework for future AI governance.

Cai Yimao (Dean of the School of Integrated Circuits at Peking University):

While DeepSeek has brought many opportunities for multiple parties, it has also led us to believe that we can overcome the U.S.' choke points by simply reducing our reliance on computing power.

However, this view is deeply flawed. To always stay ahead of the curve, we must continue to shore up our computing power with solid advances in high-end chip manufacturing. If we abandon this major front, we risk becoming vulnerable and ill-equipped to adapt to the many technological leaps and revolutions that will arrive in this fast-moving field.



The DeepSeek app on a phone on January 28

We hope to see more exploration by Chinese scientists in the direction of revolutionizing the basic model of computation. Our past chip designs are largely based on the Turing machine model (a hypothetical computational model introduced in 1936 by English mathematician and logician Alan Turing—*Ed.*) and the Von-Neumann architecture (a computer architecture proposed in 1945 by Hungarian-American mathematician and physicist John von Neumann—*Ed.*). In the future, however, we are likely to witness the continuous emergence of new methods of computer engineering.

These breakthroughs will help cultivate a homegrown ecosystem that encompasses a wide range of players in the semiconductor sector, from design and production to materials supply and software. The reason for U.S. AI chip maker NVIDIA's global dominance is its ability to build a robust ecosystem around its core processors. Hopes are high that, with the rise of DeepSeek and other home-grown innovations, China can gradually set up its own chip ecosystem.

Shen Yujing (associate research fellow of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, RUC): "Can China beat the U.S. in the AI marathon?" is a question that the tech world has been asking for ages. Before DeepSeek, the prospect of China catching up to the U.S. seemed like a distant daydream. After DeepSeek, it suddenly became a plausible reality.

When it comes to the three pillars of AI development—data, algorithms and computing power—the consensus remains that the U.S. still holds the lead on all fronts. But China is closing the gap as its data growth rate is among the fastest in the world and it is stepping up building new data centers and cutting back on energy consumption in the training of AI models.

The country has also become the world's largest source of AI professionals, with nearly half of the world's top AI researchers having completed their undergraduate studies here.

While we are trying to pull ahead, we should always remember that China and the U.S. have adopted completely different strategies in AI development. The U.S. has relied on the traditional advantages of scale and capital, whereas China, as DeepSeek exemplifies, has prioritized cost-efficiency and openness.

In an AI-driven world, where ever more powerful digital minds are constantly emerging, how can humans maintain a level of dignity

and self-worth?

Xie Yun (chief scientist at TongTech, a Chinese provider of software infrastructure and applications): The foundation of AI is statistics. Simply put, statistical methods enable AI systems to calculate probability, detect patterns and infer conclusions from data. This approach is strictly limited by its data size and cannot make inferences beyond the scope of its sample.

Unlike humans, AI lacks the ability to grasp the fundamental nature of things. That's why scientists often say that the human brain is the deepest black hole in modern science.

The gap between AI reasoning and human insight can be likened to how Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton differ in their scientific methods. By analyzing a massive amount of data, Kepler managed to deduce a set of laws that describe the motion of the planets. However, he could not have statistically discovered the law of gravitation. It was Newton who formulated this law, which was achieved not through statistical analysis, but through drawing connections between an apple's fall and the wider universe.

One thing we tend to forget about AI is that it is a craft, not a science. Like crafts, AI development is based not on scientific theories, but on experience and empirical learning.

As a saying goes, "You can't get to the moon by climbing successively taller trees." The above two features of AI determine what it can and cannot do, where it is headed and how far it can travel.

Wang: New technologies do not just change the game. They rewrite the rules by triggering structural shifts in certain industries, countries, fields and even the entire world.

One thing we know for sure is that there will be more DeepSeek-like innovations in the future. For most of us, the only thing we can do is to adapt and brace ourselves for the uncertainties that lie ahead. We are standing at a new juncture in time and are all confronted with the task of finding our own worth.

Let us embrace AI, learn from AI and evolve with AI—so that at the very least, we do not become the ones that are left behind. **BR**

A Plea for Peace

The United Nations Security Council on February 24 passed a resolution, proposed by the U.S., calling for “a swift end to the conflict” between Ukraine and Russia and urging for “a lasting peace” as the world marked the third anniversary of the war that same day.

The resolution was approved with 10 votes in favor, none against and five abstentions from France, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece and Slovenia. The resolution also mourns the loss of life in the war.

The document reiterates that the UN’s principal purpose, as expressed in the UN Charter, is to maintain international peace and security, and peacefully settle disputes.

Acting U.S. Ambassador to the UN Dorothy Shea told the council that this resolution is not a “peace deal,” but “a path to peace.”

“It is high time for peace in Ukraine,” UN Under Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo said during the Security Council meeting, while insisting that peace in Ukraine must be “just, sustainable and comprehensive.”

“Despite differences in positions, dialogue is always better than confrontation, and peace talks are always preferable to war. China supports the U.S.-Russia agreement to start peace talks,” Fu Cong, China’s permanent representative to the UN, said at the meeting.

“China expects all parties involved, as well as relevant stakeholders, to engage in the peace process at the appropriate time, seeking a fair and lasting resolution that addresses mutual concerns. The goal should be to reach a binding peace agreement that is accepted by all parties,” he said.

Fu then emphasized that because the conflict is taking place on European soil, “Europe ought to play its part for peace, to

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**—Fu Cong, China’s permanent
representative to the UN**

jointly address the root causes of the crisis and to find a balanced, effective and sustainable security framework, so as to achieve long-term security and stability on the European continent.”

He reiterated China’s guidance on the Ukraine issue is that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected; the purposes and principles of the UN Charter observed; the legitimate security concerns of all countries given due regard; and all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis supported.

China has sent its special envoy to actively engage in diplomatic mediation, has maintained contacts with the parties concerned, including Russia and Ukraine, and has also partnered with Brazil and other countries in creating the Friends of Peace Group, thus “constituting an important force for supporting and promoting peace,” Fu said.

Co-led by China and Brazil, the 15-member group, formed in September 2024 during the autumn session of the UN General Assembly in New York City, seeks to initiate peace talks concerning the conflict in Ukraine and to advance the main elements of the Sino-Brazilian peace plan.

Earlier in the day, the UN General Assembly also approved two draft resolutions on Ukraine.

One resolution, proposed by Ukraine and co-sponsored by European countries, demands an immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine and condemn Russia’s role.

It was passed by 93 countries, while 18 opposed, and 65 abstained. Both the U.S. and Russia voted against the resolution.

The U.S. declined to endorse Ukraine’s UN resolution and, at the last minute, introduced its own competing version, urging its allies to support this instead. The U.S. resolution was approved by 93 countries and opposed by eight, while 73 abstained.

The vote took place in the 193-member General Assembly, where resolutions are not legally binding but serve as a gauge of global opinion. Seeking stronger backing, the United States pushed for a vote on its proposal in the more influential UN Security Council, where adopted resolutions are binding. China, which held the council’s presidency in February, presided over the voting.

“We expect the international community to foster a favorable environment for the political resolution of the crisis and the General Assembly to play a constructive role in building a consensus for peace among its member states,” Fu said at the General Assembly. **BR**

This is an edited excerpt from a report by newspaper *China Daily*
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The Sound of Silence: Europe's Struggle for Influence

By Liang Xiao

On February 18, while U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov were in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, discussing efforts to secure a ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, diplomats from Ukraine and European Union (EU) countries were noticeably absent from the talks. This absence was expected, as Keith Kellogg, the U.S. special envoy for Ukraine and Russia, had previously stated that Europe would not be included in negotiations.

For Europe, this situation is quite humiliating. Throughout the three-year Russia-Ukraine conflict, the EU and its member states have provided over 134 billion euros (\$140.3 billion) in aid to Ukraine, nearly matching the \$177 billion provided by the U.S. However, with U.S. President Donald Trump's return to power, U.S.-Russia relations began to show signs of a rapid thaw within just a month. On the very day of the meeting between the U.S. and Russian foreign ministers in Riyadh, Trump criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, labeling him as the instigator of the conflict. This critique not only repudiated the foreign policy approach of the Joe Biden administration but also signaled a major shift in U.S. foreign policy. The "values-based" alliance that the Biden administration painstakingly built may soon become a thing of the past, leading to a decline in Europe's priority within the U.S. global strategy.

In response to the shifting U.S. policy, Europe is actively trying to persuade the U.S.

to consider its security concerns. French President Emmanuel Macron aims to leverage the rapport he established with Trump during the latter's first term to advocate for Europe's interests in the Ukraine peace process. Macron visited Washington on February 24. However, no favorable response from the Trump administration toward him had been revealed at the time of writing.

The rationale behind this lack of responsiveness is evident. On February 14, at the Munich Security Conference in Germany, U.S. Vice President JD Vance delivered a scathing critique of multiple European governments, condemning them on different issues, including domestic policies, foreign affairs and military matters. During the conference's closing session, Christoph Heusgen, Chair of the Munich Security Conference, specifically referred to Vance's remarks about Europe and voiced his concern, stating, "We must worry that our shared values are no longer secure." He was visibly moved when he discussed the idea that Europe is no longer an indispensable part of the global order.

For centuries, Europe has been a center of global power,

and today, European leaders continue to seek a more prominent role in global governance. However, Europe faces a persistent dilemma: It is a "crippled giant." Europe remains heavily reliant on NATO for military security and is closely tied to the U.S. During Trump's first term, European leaders repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with U.S. policies and proposed the creation of a European army. After the Biden administration took office, European countries opted to align their foreign policies with the U.S., often even at the expense of their own interests.

According to data from the European Commission, the EU's executive body, European businesses have incurred losses exceeding 240 billion euros (\$250 billion)—equivalent to 1.7 percent of the EU's GDP—due to compliance with U.S. sanctions on Russia. Meanwhile, the U.S. has capitalized on this situation by exporting liquefied natural gas to Europe and taking high-end manufacturing away from Europe, benefiting from the surge in European energy prices.

European politicians need to be prepared to embrace a multipolar world.

For Europe, a true awakening may lie in recognizing that the old world order, characterized by divisions of "values" and ideologies, has been fundamentally overturned. The East is not the enemy of the West, but rather a potential partner in constructing a new international order and building a community with a shared future for humanity. Ultimately, true multipolarity is not about the dispersion of power; it is about the coexistence of civilizations. **BR**

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about the dispersion of power; it is about the
coexistence of civilizations**

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Harvesting Hope: China's Vision For Agricultural Modernization

By Lan Xinzheng

On February 23, China unveiled its “No.1 Central Document” for 2025, marking the first policy statement issued by the country’s central authorities this year. This document once again emphasizes the importance of agriculture, rural areas and rural residents, proposing comprehensive reforms to further deepen rural development and promote revitalization efforts across the board.

This is the 13th consecutive year that the No.1 Central Document has prioritized agriculture, rural areas and rural residents. This consistent focus highlights the central authorities’ enduring commitment to advancing rural revitalization and underscores their determination to enhance agricultural development.

China’s rural revitalization, a strategy introduced at the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress in 2017, aims to promote the economic prosperity and overall development of rural areas. It builds on the success of the nationwide poverty alleviation campaign that had eradicated absolute poverty as of late 2020.

While China has emerged as a global manufacturing powerhouse over the past few decades, its status as a major agricultural country remains unchanged. Thus, agricultural modernization is a top priority in China’s broader modernization agenda. Focusing on agriculture and rural development is essential for ensuring food security in the country. Therefore, the No.1 Central Document must address these areas.

In the past year, despite facing serious natural disasters, China has managed to make strides in agriculture and rural development.



Grain production reached a record high of 700 billion kg, and achievements in poverty eradication have been consolidated to prevent large-scale reversion into poverty.

Farmers’ incomes have continued to grow rapidly, narrowing the income gap between urban and rural residents, while rural society has maintained stability and harmony. This steady progress in agriculture and rural areas has bolstered the country’s confidence in managing risks and challenges, laying a solid foundation for high-quality economic and social development.

However, new trends and challenges have emerged and must be addressed effectively and strategically.

To tackle these issues, the document outlines goals for comprehensive rural revitalization and the advancement of agriculture, detailing initiatives for 2025 and beyond.

It emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts to enhance China’s capacity to supply vital agricultural products, particularly grain, and to consolidate the gains achieved in poverty alleviation. The document further stresses the importance of strengthening local industries to increase rural residents’ incomes, advancing rural construction, improving rural governance and optimizing the allocation of rural resources. These initiatives are pivotal for revitalizing rural areas and stimulating their development.

The document identifies food security as a fundamental objective, emphasizing the need to ensure national food security and sustainable grain production.

It proposes measures like strictly enforcing farmland protection policies and improving farmland quality assessment standards to enhance both the quality of farmland and grain production.

The document also stresses deepening rural reforms, proposing measures such as extending rural land contracts and allowing flexible use of homesteads to optimize resource allocation, invigorate rural development and promote urban-rural integration.

Facing a world characterized by uncertainties in international food supply chains and the challenges posed by extreme weather events, as well as resource and environmental constraints within China, the No.1 Central Document aims to enhance the agricultural sector’s resilience and ensure stable agricultural development. This is of great importance not only for China but also for the international community. **BR**

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华语教学出版社大学英语教材 College English Textbooks of Sinolingua Press



The “New Era College English for International Communication” is a series of textbooks to foster college students’ capacity in international communication. The series is elaborately designed and created by Sinolingua, an imprint of China International Communications Group, in collaboration with experts and scholars from universities such as Tsinghua University and Peking University. Aiming to enhance the international communication ability of college students, the series integrates global perspectives and patriotism and focuses on telling China’s stories in English. It helps comprehensively cultivate students’ abilities in global thinking, collaboration, and global competence.



Targeting Chinese college students, Chinese culture lovers, and researchers at home and abroad, the texts cover a wide range of topics related to contemporary Chinese culture, including the connotation of China’s stories, local culture and customs, rural revitalization, a community with a shared future for humanity, and the Belt and Road Initiative, etc., which will facilitate readers in understanding local culture, Chinese culture, and world culture. Students will be able to present China’s credible, friendly, and respectable image in English in cross-cultural exchanges and play an important role in Chinese culture “going global”.

Attendees and Absentees

G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting: the hope of multilateralism or the epitome of division? By Zhao Wei

In Johannesburg, South Africa, the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting wrapped up on February 21, following two days of talks. This was the first time the G20 Foreign Ministers convened on African soil, underscoring the continent's increasing role in global affairs and the pressing need for international cooperation to address the world's growing challenges.

Ronald Lamola, South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation who headed the two-day meeting, during a post-meeting media briefing, emphasized that the event had been "very productive," offering high-level strategic discussions on the shifting global geopolitical landscape and its far-reaching impacts on diplomacy and global affairs.

Since its inception in 2008, the G20 has evolved from a platform designed to manage financial crises into a broader forum addressing global challenges, including financial stability, climate change, sustainable development and health. The theme of "Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability," which is at the core of the South African G20 presidency, guided the agenda of the recent meeting. Throughout the event, foreign ministers discussed pressing issues, including current geopolitical tensions and South Africa's key objectives for its presidency.

Africa's G20 milestone

South Africa assumed the G20 presidency in December 2024, and according to Lamola, the country is set to host approximately 130 working group meetings and 23 ministerial-level meetings throughout 2025.

By hosting this meeting, South Africa has not only amplified Africa's voice but also accentuated the continent's indispensable role in tackling global issues, including energy and food insecurity, sustainable development and economic resilience.

"The nations of the world look to the G20 for leadership on the most pressing issues confronting our world... We want our G20 Presidency to be one in which all voices are heard, and in which all views count," said South African President Cyril Ramaphosa during his speech on February 20.

South Africa's G20 leadership has brought to the forefront the region's aspirations for a more balanced and equitable global order. The country has called for inclusivity, stressing the need for a new international economic framework that better represents the Global South.

The Global South consists of nations that are generally characterized by relatively low levels of economic and industrial development, typically located to the south of more industrialized nations.

During the meeting, the South African Government focused on three key areas: reforming international financial institutions, securing climate financing and stabilizing global food supply chains. A major topic of discussion was the adjustment of International Monetary Fund quotas. Emerging economies, including China, India and Brazil, have advocated for an increase in their voting share from 45 percent to over 48 percent, reflecting their growing economic influence. At the same time, they propose a reduction of the voting share for Western countries from 55 percent to 51.53 percent. However, any changes to the voting structure require the approval of 85 percent of the total voting power. Given that the U.S. holds 16.49 percent of this power and possessing veto rights over key decisions, implementing these changes poses considerable challenges.

This situation underlines the structural dilemma within the G20 mechanism, where the demands of developing nations to amplify their voices conflict with the entrenched interests of dominant powers that wish to maintain their influence within the current global framework.

Partnership beyond rhetoric

During the meeting, Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and China's foreign minister, reaffirmed China's commitment to strengthening South-South cooperation. This was his second visit to Africa in 2025, following a trip to four African countries in January. His speech emphasized China's long-standing approach of supporting an open world economy and aiding Africa, along with other developing regions, in their pursuit of sustainable development. China's policy toward Africa remains a cornerstone of its broader South-South cooperation strategy, which aims to foster mutual support, shared prosperity and collective action among developing nations.

In an interview with newspaper *China Youth Daily* on February 20, Yang Baorong, director of the economic research office at the Institute of West Asian and African Studies under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, highlighted the importance of the G20 in the context of global development and transformation. Yang described the G20 as a vital platform for building consensus, promoting cooperation and addressing regional issues. He noted that Wang's participation in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting demonstrated China's commitment to multilateral cooperation.

Yang also said Wang's visit was a pivotal step in advancing the China-Africa cooperation initiatives proposed by President Xi Jinping at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation last September. At the summit, Xi announced that China is prepared to collaborate closely with Africa over the next three years to



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa delivers a speech during the Group of 20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, on February 20

G20, with Rubio's absence in particular drawing attention to the growing fractures in global governance, particularly amid ongoing tensions between

implement "10 partnership actions" aimed at modernization.

According to Yang, these initiatives cover 10 primary areas, including mutual learning among civilizations, trade prosperity, and cultural exchange. The global community has been closely watching how China plans to implement the cooperation agreements made at the FOCAC summit.

Wang's trip to South Africa for the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss specific steps with African counterparts to advance these initiatives.

China's emphasis on economic development, trade and infrastructure investment in Africa has been a key driver of the continent's growth. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, China has lifted Africa's connectivity with global markets. The BRI aims to strengthen infrastructure along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, facilitating critical investments in transportation, energy and technology. These investments have played an integral role in promoting Africa's economic development and its integration into the global economy.

Wang further emphasized that the G20 should collaborate with Africa in key areas such as industrialization, infrastructure development and green minerals, among others, to accelerate the continent's progress toward modernization.

The cost of absenteeism

One of the most notable absences at the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting was U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. His decision to skip the summit, coupled with the absence of U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent from the G20 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting in Cape Town on February 26, raised eyebrows. When asked about his absence, Bessent asserted that he was "fulfilling his duties in Washington," whereas Rubio bluntly criticized South Africa, stating that "South Africa is doing very bad things" and its policies are "anti-American." Their no-shows underscored shifting dynamics within the

major powers.

The U.S. Government, under President Donald Trump, has increasingly embraced a unilateral approach to foreign policy, distancing itself from multilateral platforms like the G20. Rubio's refusal to attend the meeting mirrors a broader skepticism in Washington toward multilateral diplomacy. The absence of key American figures at such an important summit raises questions about the future of U.S. engagement in global governance.

Li Haidong, Director of the American Studies Center at China Foreign Affairs University, discussed the situation in an interview with China Media Group's Global News Radio on February 7. He said the current U.S. administration's decision to refrain from participating poses challenges for the G20, making it more difficult to reach international consensus or address key issues swiftly, thus adding further uncertainty to an already complex global landscape.

"The U.S. secretary of state's announcement to boycott the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting also reflects Washington's reluctance to continue fulfilling its role as a developed nation in supporting the economic and social progress of developing countries," Li added. **BR**

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A Destination for Development

China ramps up efforts to improve appeal to foreign investors By Li Xiaoyang

U.S. carmaker Tesla's new Megafactory in Shanghai, dedicated to manufacturing energy-storage batteries known as Megapacks, began production on February 11. The new plant is the company's second major facility in Shanghai and the first of its kind outside the United States.

Covering about 200,000 square meters, the project involved a total investment of 1.45 billion yuan (\$200 million). Up to 10,000 Megapack storage units are scheduled to be produced there annually.

This was not the only good news for Tesla, though. On February 20, Chinese authorities introduced an action plan for expanding high-standard opening up and ensuring foreign investment stability, to improve expectations of foreign-funded enterprises seeking expansion in China, including the electric vehicle giant.

The new action plan, with 20 specific measures in four categories, includes further expanding market access in multiple sectors and increasing efforts to promote investment.

"The action plan, rolled out amid growing global uncertainty, will improve expectations of multinationals investing and operating in China," Nie Pingxiang, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, told *Beijing Review*, stressing that China remains a major foreign investment destination with its vast market, stable economic growth and complete industrial and supply chains.

Stronger support

Among the measures, foreign equity investment in China will be encouraged to attract more high-quality foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country's listed companies.

The country will continue expanding its pilot programs to open up fields such as telecommunication and medical services in a timely manner. It will also lift restrictions on domestic loans for foreign-invested enterprises, allowing the firms to use domestic financing for equity investments, according to the plan.

According to Nie, the measures focus on opening up more sectors and leveraging the role of national-level economic and technological development zones and free trade zones in attracting foreign investment. Other

priorities include improving supportive policies and providing guarantee services for foreign-funded enterprises.

Despite rising geopolitical uncertainty, China has been expanding opening up and improving domestic business environment. Since 2024, the authorities have expanded opening up in sectors like healthcare, lift foreign investment access restrictions in manufacturing, and reduce nationwide foreign investment access restrictions from 31 to 29 items.

"Foreign investment has been contributing to and benefited from China's reform and opening up," Ling Ji, Vice Minister of Commerce and Deputy China International Trade Representative, told a press conference in Beijing on February 20.

According to Ling, foreign-invested enterprises now contribute nearly 7 percent of China's employment, one seventh of the country's tax revenue and about one third of its imports and exports.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) showed that a total of 59,080 new foreign-invested firms were established across China in 2024, up 9.9 percent year on year.

China remains an important market for U.S. companies, with nearly half of respondents ranking it as a top-three global investment priority, according to the China Business Climate Survey Report released by the American Chamber of Commerce in China (AmCham China) on January 23.

More than half of the surveyed U.S. enterprises are concerned about possible further deterioration in relations between the two economies. Still, over half of the companies expect to increase investment in their China operations in 2025, the report read.

The AmCham South China, which represents more than 2,300 American and International companies doing business in south China, also released on February 26 its 2025 Special Report on the State of Business in South China, gathering feedback from 316 companies in 2024. The surveyed companies are mainly from the U.S.,



China and the European Union.

The proportion of companies that generated over 60 percent of their global revenue from China increased by 5 percentage points last year, reaching 31 percent, the report said.

Fifty-eight percent of the companies rank China among their top-three investment priorities. In 2025, 76 percent of the companies intend to reinvest in China, with 74 percent of the American companies planning reinvestments, up 11 percentage points year on year.

Harley Seyedin, Chairman and President of AmCham South China, said in an interview with Xinhua News Agency that over 73 percent of AmCham's member companies in south China focus no longer on exports, but producing goods or providing services for the Chinese market.

"Businesses are increasing their commitments in China for a stronger foothold in this critical market. The reinvestment surge signals confidence in China," he said.

Localized operations

Foreign-funded companies have been localizing their products and services to better cater to preferences and needs of Chinese consumers.

For the 2025 Chinese New Year, which fell on January 29, Danish toymaker LEGO Group launched a festive event in Yu Garden, an iconic tourist attraction in Shanghai. Running until February 12, it showcased its festival-themed sets blended with traditional Chinese intangible cultural heritage elements. The brand also rolled out exclusive Chinese New Year-themed displays across its authorized stores in China.

LEGO Group now operates more than 400 stores in nearly 120 Chinese cities. The company is expanding production capacity at its factory in Jiaxing, a city in Zhejiang Province, and is building a LEGOLAND in Shanghai, which is slated to open this summer. It has also developed a local digital technology team as one of its four digital centers.

According to LEGO Group, Chinese consumers are increasingly seeking customized retail services. It is confident in the opportunities in China, and will keep exploring the huge market potential.

U.S. coffee chain Starbucks has also increased its bet on the Chinese market by continuing to grow its presence. As of the first quarter of its 2025 fiscal year, which ended on December 29, 2024, the number of Starbucks China stores had reached 7,685, covering over 1,000 county-level regions.

The company accelerated its expansion into small cities and counties, where the performance of new stores continued to exceed that of those in larger cities, according to Starbucks.

In September 2024, the brand launched innovative offerings tailored

for Chinese consumers, including the Pomelo Oolong Tea Latte and the Persimmon Frappuccino. The localized creations quickly captured attention, drawing in crowds eager to experience the unique flavors.

As one of the first global energy equipment and service providers to enter the Chinese market, U.S.-based GE Vernova Inc., is exploring to get involved in China's energy sector, and participate in developing the country's new power system.

According to the GE Vernova, China is one of the world's biggest and most dynamic energy markets, and it has been and will continue to be one of the most important markets for the company.

In China, GE Vernova has about 4,000 employees in more than 10 offices, research and development and manufacturing sites. It has six gas turbine projects across China, with a cumulative power capacity of over 9.7 gigawatts.

More appeal

China needs to stick to its own track on stabilizing foreign investment, mainly by addressing the challenges faced by multinationals, expanding opening up, and improving the business environment, Nie said.

In 2024, paid-in FDI in the Chinese mainland exceeded 826 billion yuan (\$114 billion), down 27.1 percent year on year. But FDI inflows soared 98.7 percent year on year in the medical equipment and instrument manufacturing sector, 40.8 percent in the professional technical services sector and 21.9 percent in the computer and office equipment manufacturing sector.

In January this year, paid-in FDI totaled 97.59 billion yuan (\$13.61 billion), up 27.5 percent from late December, MOFCOM data showed. In the same month, paid-in FDI in the manufacturing and hi-tech manufacturing sectors grew 2.6 and 0.8 percentage points, respectively, from the end of 2024.

Nie stressed that global supply and industrial chain upgrading makes it necessary to optimize and upgrade FDI structure to stabilize China's foreign investment.

"More measures should center on attracting higher-quality foreign investment to meet domestic demand, boost new growth drivers, and encourage new investment such as cross-border mergers and acquisitions," she said. **BR**



U.S. carmaker Tesla's new Megafactory, dedicated to manufacturing energy-storage batteries known as Megapacks, in Shanghai, on February 8

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Invest in China

China's economic growth and business environment are attracting foreign investment By Wang Ruohan

Beijing's commercial landscape just got a vibrant addition. On January 20, the city's Daxing District announced that Egyptian company Aegilon had established a business, Aegilon (Beijing), in the district with a registered capital of \$2.1 million.

This move is a clear sign of the international community's confidence in China's investment environment. "China is a good country to put your investments. It's safe. Their workforce is diligent and intelligent," a comment on Facebook read.

Aegilon (Beijing), which specializes in sourcing high-quality Chinese mobile phone accessories and agricultural car parts at competitive prices to sell in the Egyptian market, has chosen to establish itself in Yufa Town in Daxing. By leveraging China's manufacturing advantages and its sophisticated supply chain infrastructure, the company aims to meet the growing demand for mobile accessories in Egypt. Aegilon is not an isolated case; an increasing number of foreign enterprises are being drawn to China and are eager to share in the country's development opportunities.

Economic growth

Despite the slow recovery of the global economy, intensifying geopolitical tensions, and persistently weak foreign direct investment (FDI), China has steadily advanced high-level opening up. The construction of a modern industrial system has also progressed, and the overall economy is experiencing an upward trend.

China has ramped up efforts to attract and stabilize foreign investment. In 2024, the government enhanced support services for foreign enterprises, held regular roundtable discussions, launched pilot programs in sectors including telecommunications and healthcare, and fully removed market entry restrictions in manufacturing, according to an article written by Wang Wentao, Minister of Commerce (MOFCOM), published in newspaper *People's Daily* in January. Official data show that last year, China welcomed 59,000 new foreign-invested enterprises, a 9.9-percent increase, and attracted FDI worth 826.3 billion yuan (\$113.7 billion), with hi-tech manufacturing accounting for 11.7 percent of the total.

China's growing appeal to foreign investors can be attributed to a combination of favorable macroeconomic conditions, a robust domestic market, and a strong emphasis on innovation—all of which have contributed to an increasingly attractive investment environment.

The country's macroeconomic performance has been one of the key factors driving foreign investment. In 2024, China's GDP reached an impressive 134.9 trillion yuan (\$18.6 trillion), growing 5 percent year on year. Meanwhile, the national urban unemployment rate averaged 5.1 percent. These positive economic indicators reflect the country's resilience and stability, offering a reliable foundation for foreign businesses looking to invest.

In addition to macroeconomic stability, China's domestic market plays a key role in fostering investor confidence. The nation's commitment to expanding domestic demand has unlocked considerable growth potential. According to the data of MOFCOM, in 2024, retail sales of consumer goods surged to 48.8 trillion yuan (\$6.7 trillion), growing by 3.5 percent. This expansion of domestic demand has become a vital engine driving economic growth, further boosting China's attractiveness as a destination for investment.

Another crucial factor contributing to China's appeal is its focus on innovation as a key driver of economic growth. In recent years, the country has made substantial investments in research and development (R&D), resulting in impressive technological advancements. The 2024 Report on Foreign Investment in China, released by the MOFCOM, disclosed that, in that year, China's R&D expenditure reached 3.33 trillion yuan (\$457 billion), an 8.1-percent increase from the previous year, accounting for 2.64 percent of GDP. These efforts have enhanced China's technological capabilities.

The continued optimization of China's business environment and its stable macroeconomic conditions have boosted foreign investor confidence.

Various surveys indicate that foreign enterprises remain optimistic about China's market opportunities. The 2025 China Business Climate Survey Report released by the American Chamber of Commerce in China revealed that 48 percent of companies surveyed rank China among their top-three global investment priorities, including 10 percent that operate exclusively in China. A growing number of the responding companies believe that the quality of China's investment environment has improved, rising from 28 percent in 2023 to 33 percent in 2024.

Pro-business environment

To further attract foreign capital, China is committed to strengthening its "Invest in China" initiative, as emphasized by Minister Wang. Moving forward, China will refine investment promotion mechanisms, improve project matchmaking, and enhance services to ensure smooth project implementation. Key investment promotion events will continue to be held under the "Invest in China" brand to facilitate high-quality foreign investment.

Daxing has successfully pursued foreign investment and attracted companies like Aegilon. The local government of Yufa has implemented 10 measures to optimize the



Workers assemble equipment in the production workshop of GALAXIS Technology in Zhejiang Province on February 25

business environment, focusing on thoughtful services, refined management and open innovation. These initiatives have created a livable and business-friendly international environment, with policies such as fostering transparent government-business relations, developing an internationalized business climate and offering comprehensive service guarantees receiving widespread acclaim.

For instance, during Aegilon's business registration process, Yufa's local government closely engaged with the company to understand its development plans and provided tailored policy guidance. A specialized service package—comprising designated contacts, professional translation, agency services and document pre-review—ensured a smooth registration experience. Moreover, coordination with market regulation authorities greatly reduced processing times, allowing Aegilon to commence operations swiftly through an efficient one-stop service mechanism.

“Daxing offers an advantageous location with access to modern infrastructure, a robust supply chain, and proximity to both production facilities and logistics hubs. The Chinese market itself, along with government incentives and a favorable business environment, made it a strong choice for investment,” Waild Elsyed Elokda, founder and CEO of Aegilon (Beijing), told *Beijing Review*.

With the strengthening economic ties between China and Egypt, the Egyptian market shows promising growth potential. Aegilon is always exploring new opportunities to expand, including the possibility of establishing local production or R&D teams to strengthen its capabilities, Elokda added.

On February 20, the Daxing District High-Quality Industrial Development Conference was held, unveiling an “Opportunities List” and a “Capabilities List.” The

“Opportunities List” highlights the district's investment potential, providing businesses with precise investment guidance. The “Capabilities List” showcases the district's strong industrial support system, including business incubation, service efficiency and technology commercialization. To further facilitate business matchmaking, the district released the 2025 Daxing District Enterprise Products and Services Directory, covering five key sectors—biopharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing, digital economy, construction and services. The directory features 199 enterprises offering over 870 core products and 30 major service categories, demonstrating the district's robust industrial ecosystem and innovative capacity.

Looking ahead, China will continue to enhance its business environment and expand market access, attracting more international enterprises to share in its development opportunities. The establishment of Aegilon in Daxing serves as a testament to this ongoing trend. **BR**

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Local Two Sessions: Drafting Tailored Strategic Playbooks

Empowering developing nations with actionable plans drawn from China's experience

By Mostak Ahamed Galib

The world is currently navigating a period of profound uncertainty, a time some visionary thinkers have called “changes unseen in a century.” Global challenges seem to multiply daily, leaving many to question: Where are the solutions? I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have had a unique opportunity in January 2025—an invitation to participate as a distinguished foreign guest at Hubei Province’s local “two sessions.”

This experience allowed me to witness firsthand how China is preparing to confront these turbulent times. As a researcher from a developing country, I found the insights from the session particularly valuable—not just for understanding China’s approach but for identifying lessons that could help my own country and other developing nations navigate such challenging times. The strategies and policies outlined in the report serve as a potential blueprint for resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth in the face of global uncertainties.

The local two sessions in China are more than just meetings; they reflect the country’s collective effort to steer its future amidst global uncertainty. These annual gatherings of local people’s congresses and committees of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) set the tone for local policy, development and innovation. Before the national Two Sessions in Beijing (which usually take place in early March—*Ed.*), provincial-level governments like Hubei align their objectives and strategies, ensuring that regional growth mirrors the broader national vision.

During my visit, I had the honor of listening to the 2025 Hubei Provincial Government Work Report—a document that encapsulates not only the region’s key achievements over the past year but also its forward-thinking strategy for high-quality, sustainable growth. Hubei has emerged

as a very important player in driving China’s future, emphasizing innovation, infrastructure, market expansion and the creation of high-quality living standards. The report is a testament to China’s resilience in an unpredictable world, positioning Hubei as a beacon of how provinces can thrive even in the face of global turbulence.

The bold objectives set forth in the report reveal Hubei’s commitment to overcoming adversity and contributing to the country’s economic and social advancement, as well as its pivotal role in China’s high-quality development strategy. This vision offers us not only a blueprint for sustainable growth but also a message of hope and direction amid the storm of global challenges.

Economic growth and resilience

This year marked the beginning of a critical phase for Hubei. Despite a complex and volatile external environment, the province was able to boost its economic output. Hubei’s GDP reached 55.8 trillion yuan (\$ 7.7 trillion), a 6-percent growth rate—outpacing both the national average and regional counterparts. Key indicators such as fixed asset investments, retail consumption and public budget revenues all showed encouraging growth, underlining the province’s strong recovery trajectory.

What stands out is the province’s proactive strategy to counter the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by ensuring that both short-term recovery and long-term resilience were simultaneously addressed. The government’s relentless focus on infrastructure, technological advancements and consumption has not only stabilized but even accelerated Hubei’s economic growth.

The report highlights Hubei’s ongoing commitment to transforming its industrial landscape, moving from traditional manufacturing to modern, hi-tech sectors. Central to this effort is the “51020” (five major areas of development, 10 key industries to prioritize, 20 industrial clusters or hubs) modern industrial cluster, which has helped to facilitate the emergence of new economic drivers. The province has invested heavily in sectors such as digital technology, automotive manufacturing and healthcare—ensuring that its economy shifts from labor-intensive industries to those that are knowledge-driven and innovative.

Advancing sustainable development

Perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of the report is the province’s forward-thinking approach to sustainable development. As China continues to embrace the philosophy of ecological civilization, Hubei has placed the protection of its natural resources at the forefront of its agenda. The province has initiated comprehensive river basin management projects, including the improvement of water quality in the Yangtze River, and it has made strides in implementing clean energy solutions, with the share of clean energy generation increasing to 65 percent from 55 percent in 2015.

COURTESY PHOTO



As an invited foreign guest, Mostak Ahamed Galib attends and observes the Third Session of the 14th Hubei Provincial People's Congress held in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, on January 16

At the same time, Hubei's commitment to the green economy is evident in its push for circular economy practices and the transformation of industrial parks into green hubs. The province's goal of achieving carbon neutrality has been complemented by its investments in green infrastructure, such as expanding electric vehicle infrastructure and promoting the use of renewable energy.

Hubei's emphasis on balancing economic development with ecological sustainability resonates with the global call for green growth and climate resilience, creating a model for other developing regions, including Bangladesh, to follow.

While economic growth and innovation have been major drivers of Hubei's development, the report also places considerable emphasis on improving the well-being of the province's residents. Hubei has focused on expanding its public service offerings, including healthcare, education, and social welfare, ensuring that all citizens can benefit from the economic advancements being made.

The province has invested in creating more jobs and providing support for a wide array of social welfare programs, including those for the elderly and vulnerable population groups. With initiatives aimed at expanding healthcare infrastructure and improving public education, Hubei has ensured that its growth is inclusive and benefits all sections of society.

The report also reflects the province's commitment to improving the living standards of its citizens through affordable housing projects, rural development initiatives and enhanced cultural services. With a focus on "people-centered development," Hubei's policies are designed to ensure that growth is not just economic, but also social and cultural.

Strategic vision for the future

Through its infrastructure investments, digital innovation and international trade networks, Hubei is not just advancing China's internal development but also

fostering international collaboration.

Hubei has taken steps in reinforcing its role as a key hub within the Belt and Road Initiative, a China-proposed initiative to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. Infrastructure investments have been central to this vision, with the completion of major projects like Asia's largest cargo airport at Huahu, international trade routes, and a high-speed rail network. The province has also become a pivotal player in the growing connectivity between China and Central Asia and Europe.

The rapid development of logistics infrastructure has enhanced the province's international competitiveness, expediting smoother trade flows and deeper integration into global supply chains. Furthermore, the development of strategic transportation corridors, such as the China-Europe freight trains, has improved access to overseas markets, making it a vital link between China's interior and international destinations. This dovetails with Hubei's ambition to contribute to China's broader objectives of fostering global trade connectivity.

Hubei's 2025 two sessions work report demonstrates how a region can overcome challenges, embrace transformation and integrate into the global economy while prioritizing social welfare, environmental sustainability, and high-quality growth. By emphasizing innovation, infrastructure and people-centric development, the province is setting a standard for what can be achieved through forward-thinking policies and decisive action in a tumultuous world.

For other developing countries, navigating their own paths of economic development and international cooperation, the lessons from Hubei's strategies provide valuable insights into how to balance economic growth with social equity and environmental sustainability.

The global uncertainties of the 21st century necessitate resilient, adaptable strategies, and Hubei's experience serves as a beacon of how local and national governments can navigate these challenges while ensuring sustainable and inclusive development for all. **BR**

The author is originally from Bangladesh and currently serves as the executive director of the Cross-Cultural Communication and Belt and Road Initiative Research Center at Wuhan University of Technology
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Echoes of the Ocean

China's coastal bays lead the way in marine conservation By Yuan Yuan

Bryde's whales have now become regular visitors to Weizhou Island in Beihai, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Every November, these marine giants, measuring 8 to 12 meters in length, appear in the surrounding waters to give birth and nurture their young, staying until April of the following year.

As one of the world's most mysterious baleen whales, Bryde's whales were first monitored on Weizhou Island in the spring of 2018. Previously, due to overhunting and marine ecological degradation, their population had declined to critically endangered levels, making sightings in Chinese waters extremely rare.

Currently, the number of Bryde's whales around Weizhou Island has increased from an initial six to over 60. This region is now the only known stable feeding and nursery ground for Bryde's whales in China. Every year during the whales' visit, tourists flock to the area to observe them.

Marine renaissance

The return of Bryde's whales has been attributed to the improved ecological environment of Weizhou Island's waters. Lan Wenlu, Director of the Guangxi Marine Environmental Monitoring Center, has been engaged in marine environmental monitoring for 17 years and has witnessed the ecological improvements in the area.

He revealed that since 2012, the region put in place ecological red lines—legally designated areas of ecological significance, to limit destructive development activities; and carried out coral reef restoration projects, establishing coral reef protection zones and regulating tourism and fishing activities. As the ecological environment improved, marine species in the area gradually increased.

"The increase in marine species has become a key factor in the appearance of Bryde's whales," he told newspaper *Guangxi Daily*. "Research has found that the waters near Weizhou Island are abundant in fish, especially from September to April of the following year. Schooling fish favored by Bryde's whales, such as anchovies and sardines, are widely distributed in these waters, attracting the whales to feed during specific seasons."

The quality of the marine ecological environment

of Guangxi has ranked among the best in the country in the recent 12 consecutive years. The area is also home to rare species such as Chinese white dolphins and horseshoe crabs, and it is one of China's most biodiverse marine regions.

Today, traveling to Beihai to observe whales has become a distinctive cultural and tourism feature of the region during November to April. Mother whales and their newborn calves, with their bluish-gray backs cutting through the waves, create a unique spectacle in the area.

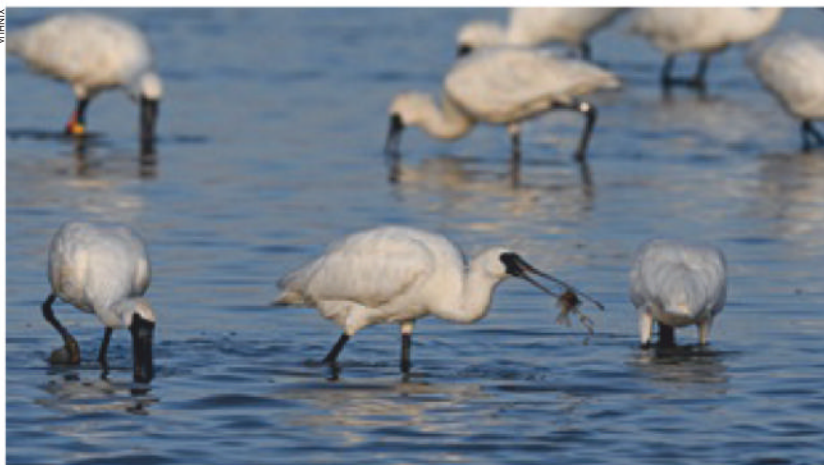
On January 25, Weizhou Island was recognized as one of the third batch of Beautiful Bay ecological cases announced by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

The Beautiful Bay initiative, launched in China in 2021, aims to create pristine coastal environments characterized by clear seawater, clean beaches and thriving habitats for fish and seabirds, fostering harmony between humans and the ocean. Since its inception, bay-specific policies have been implemented to coordinate nearshore pollution control, ecological conservation and restoration, and the environmental remediation of shores and beaches.

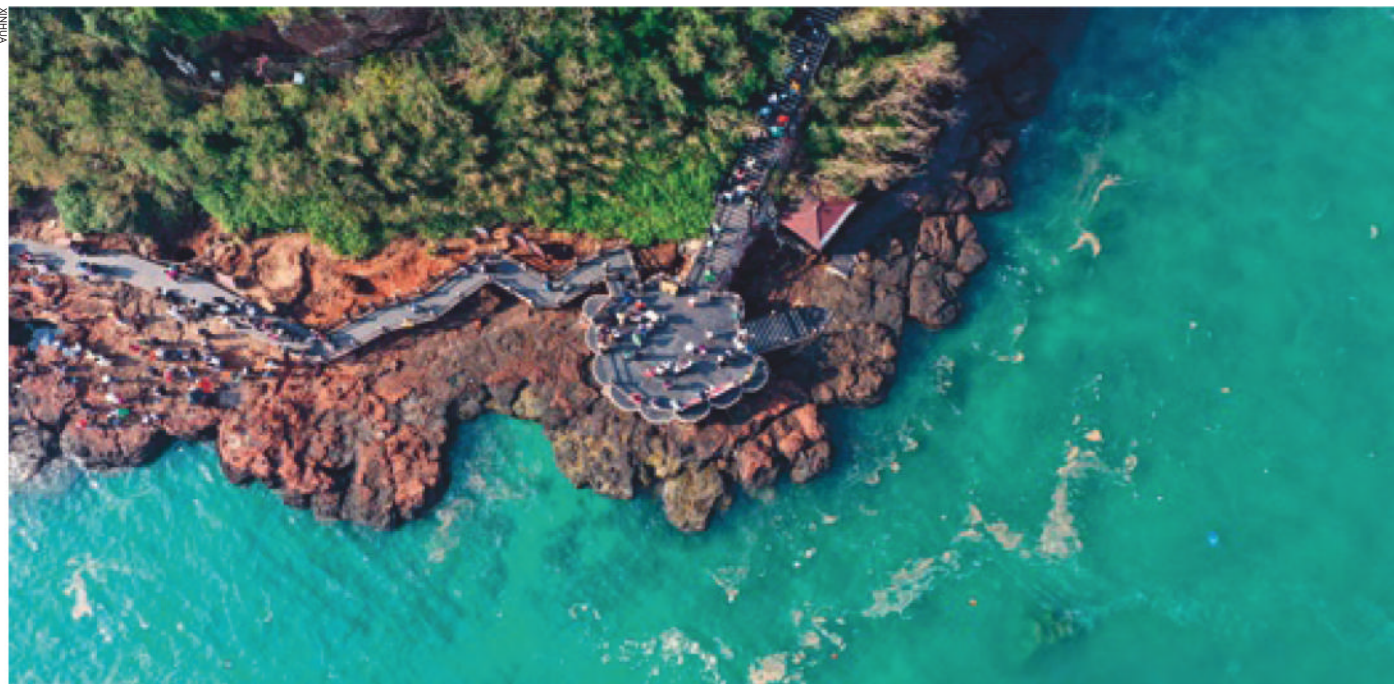
The Plan for Marine Eco-Environmental Protection During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period has divided nearshore areas into 283 bay units, integrating the construction of Beautiful Bays into the broader vision of building a Beautiful China. The plan sets a mid-term target of building 40 percent of these bays into Beautiful Bays by 2027, while all of them will become Beautiful Bays by 2035.

To ensure effective oversight, an administration platform for building Beautiful Bays has been established. Utilizing on-site surveys and remote sensing monitoring, authorities track progress, implement smart supervision, and urge local governments to adopt comprehensive bay management strategies tailored to their specific conditions.

Progress has been steady. By the end of 2023, approximately half of the 1,682 key tasks and construction projects had been completed. This included the improvement and



A flock of black-faced spoonbills forage at a wetland in Danzhou, south China's Hainan Province, on January 13



Weizhou Island in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on January 19

restoration of 475 km of coastlines and 16,700 hectares of coastal wetlands. At least 85 percent of the sea areas in 167 bays achieved good to excellent water quality, with 102 bays showing further improvements compared to 2022.

Eco-transformation

Another bay added to this year's Beautiful Bay list is on Dachen Island, located in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province. With more than 30 bays, Zhejiang has the longest coastline of all of China's province-level regions.

However, the province faces unique challenges in building Beautiful Bays due to its geographical conditions. Sediment from the Yangtze River estuary and Hangzhou Bay struggles to settle, negatively impacting the water quality of nearshore areas. Additionally, the dense population and industrial activities along the coast historically placed significant pressure on marine pollution control efforts.

Huang Haibin, a 60-year-old fisherman from Dachen Island, ended his fishing career a decade ago and shifted his focus to marine waste collection, converting his fishing boat into a garbage cleanup vessel. The plastic waste he collects has been processed under the "Blue Cycle" model, a pioneering marine plastic governance model that originated on Dachen Island in 2022 and earned the United Nations' Champions of the Earth award in 2023.

Under the model, plastic marine debris are processed into plastic pellets, and ultimately turned into recycled products, creating a sustainable and circular value chain.

"Previously, the Dachen Island was more pristine, but as the island gains more recognition, we are exploring ways to balance development with conservation," Ye Lifan, Deputy Mayor of Dachen Town on Dachen Island, told newspaper *Zhejiang Daily*.

Another key project in bay restoration on the island is the creation of artificial beaches, which not only protect the coastline from erosion but also serve as the foundation for ecological landscapes.

Since 2020, Zhejiang Dachen Island Development and Construction Group Co.

Ltd. has been responsible for implementing ecological restoration projects. After identifying three beach locations, the team spread over 200,000 cubic meters of sand along a 908-meter sandy shoreline. For open beaches, they carefully laid artificial reefs and larger soft stones at the base to minimize sand loss, displacement and siltation.

"Dachen Island's coastline has undergone a remarkable transformation," Ye said, highlighting the island's unique ecological resources, which have made its yellow croaker and mussels highly renowned.

The island also launched the "Dual Carbon" Digital Platform, designed to monitor and manage carbon emissions and carbon sequestration in real time, optimizing resource use and promoting sustainable development. Yi said the island has implemented a series of innovative projects, including fully electric aquaculture, fully electric homestays, fully electric scenic areas and fully electric transportation, driving a shift toward low-carbon production and lifestyles.

"Despite the thriving of industries like aquaculture and tourism in recent years, the integration of environmental protection measures has ensured they do not add pressure to the ecological environment," Yi said. **BR**

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Sports Illustrated

The unexpected transformation of a northeast Chinese industrial city
into a swimwear hub By Ji Jing

Even in freezing winter, the offices of Yinghua Swimwear Manufacturing Co. Ltd. in Xingcheng were buzzing with activity. Under bright lights, livestreaming hosts enthusiastically showcased the company's latest swimwear to online audiences on retail platforms like Taobao and Douyin.

"This is our brand's new Chinese-style collection," one host exclaimed, "featuring pearl and coral patterns—perfect for relaxing at a hot spring during the Spring Festival holiday (January 28-February 4)!"

A quick search for "swimsuits" on popular retail platforms reveals that many originate from Xingcheng, part of Huludao in Liaoning Province. Xingcheng was once defined by its traditional heavy industries, like petrochemicals and non-ferrous metals, and few then could have predicted its rise as a fashion center.

Secret of success

The city has many swimwear producers. Tian Shu, General Manager of Xingcheng Haocheng Garment Co. Ltd., is among the third generation of swimwear entrepreneurs in his family. "My family has witnessed the development of Xingcheng's swimwear industry. Our business started with my grandmother sewing swimsuits at home, using just a sewing machine," he told Xinhua News Agency. "Then my parents opened a small workshop, and my aunt would carry large bags of swimsuits to wholesale markets, searching for customers."

Tian's grandmother, now nearly 90 years old, was among Xingcheng's swimwear pioneers.

Xingcheng is located on the western shore of Liaodong Bay in southwest Liaoning, bordering the Bohai Sea. The city is bounded by 261 km of coastline, nearly 90 percent of which is sunny, sandy beaches. As early as the early 1980s, Xingcheng was already a well-known coastal summer vacation destination, popular with many residents of Beijing, 400 km to the southwest.

These visitors' colorful swimsuits caught the attention of local residents, as they were then only common in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai. From these

swimsuits, some Xingcheng locals recognized a promising business opportunity. At the time, some women could make around 30 pieces a day, earning 1 yuan (\$0.14) for each piece. The income was substantial compared to the approximately 60 yuan (\$8) monthly salary in a factory.

In those early days, Xingcheng's swimwear industry was primarily composed of small, family-run workshops. Locals primarily sold their creations directly to beachgoers, displaying their wares in baskets.

In the 1990s, state-owned enterprise reforms triggered a wave of layoffs across northeast China. Stripped of their secure jobs, workers had to seek new livelihoods. Swimwear factories, offering comparatively good pay and ample employment opportunities, quickly became highly sought-after employers. These factories offered salaries as high as 300 yuan (\$41). This influx of labor fueled the transition of Xingcheng's swimwear industry from small, family-run workshops to larger-scale operations.

Xingcheng isn't alone in China as a swimwear production hub. Jinjiang, a port city in Fujian Province, and Yiwu, the renowned small commodity distribution center in Zhejiang Province, are also recognized for their thriving swimwear industries. Guangzhou in Guangdong Province also boasts many swimsuit factories.

In this competitive landscape, and with Xingcheng lacking a clear geographical advantage, the city has still managed to rival, and even slightly outperform, its competitors.

One crucial factor in its success lies in a little-known piece of history. During the early days of the People's Republic of China, cotton production lagged and people wore nylon. The first batch of nylon—the synthetic fabric ideally suited for swimwear—was produced at the city's Jinxi Chemical Plant. This easy access to nylon laid a vital foundation for Xingcheng's swimwear industry.



Zhang Jiarui (left), an executive of a swimwear company in Xingcheng, Huludao, Liaoning Province, helps a client select swimwear on April 11, 2024

The bikini square
in Xingcheng



Furthermore, the local government has consistently prioritized the swimwear industry. Initiatives like government-sponsored exhibitions help local enterprises expand their market reach. To foster the development of independent brands, the government also provides training programs and actively recruits talented individuals for swimsuit companies.

Through the combined efforts of entrepreneurs, skilled workers and the government, Xingcheng's swimwear industry has snowballed.

Today, 80 percent of Xingcheng's swimwear companies produce their own brands, including high-end ones like Balneaire. Balneaire has even established a brick-and-mortar presence in Beijing's prestigious Galleries Lafayette Department Store. Many of its designs have graced the pages of fashion magazines, with some luxury swimsuits commanding prices of over 2,000 yuan (\$275) a piece.

The swimwear 2.0 era

In recent years, Xingcheng's swimwear industry seized the rapid ascent of online retail platforms.

If the period before 2012 was Xingcheng swimwear's 1.0 era, defined by a reliance on offline sales, then the years following 2012 ushered in the 2.0 era, dominated by the digital marketplace.

Sun Kaibin's Sanqi Garment Factory is a prime example of the new generation of companies. Established 11 years ago, the factory operates a flagship store on online retail platform Tmall. Today, online retail accounts for a remarkable 90 percent of its sales.

Capitalizing on the e-commerce boom, Sun's factory rapidly expanded. Employing over 100 workers, it now produces approximately 1 million pieces annually.

Sun's company was far from alone in experiencing this surge. Data from 2018, the peak of e-commerce development, revealed that Xingcheng then had over 40,000 online swimwear stores. Notably, 80 percent of all online swimwear sales in China were shipped from Xingcheng that year.

Now, Xingcheng's swimwear companies are again transforming, this time embracing digital and intelligent manufacturing. At the production workshop of Zhuoyimei Garment Factory, for example, automatic cutting beds have replaced manual labor. "Digital and intelligent transformation has improved production capacity, enabling enterprises to handle large orders," Liu Zhuo, the factory's general manager, told Xinhua.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also being applied in Xingcheng's swimwear industry. The Liaoning Provincial Textile and Garment Association, the Xingcheng Swimwear Association and Hangzhou Deep Thinking Artificial Intelligence Co. Ltd. jointly established the Xingcheng Branch of

the Liaoning Textile and Garment AI Design Research Institute. Wang Fei, General Manager of Hangzhou Deep Thinking Artificial Intelligence Co. Ltd., explained that through AI algorithms, the most popular designs can be swiftly identified from thousands of options, greatly shortening the design cycle and boosting efficiency.

Current statistics paint a picture of sustained growth: Xingcheng is now home to over 1,300 swimwear companies, with an average annual output of around 170 million pieces (or sets), accounting for more than 40 percent of the domestic market share.

In March 2024, the TV series *The Swimsuit Saga*, based on the stories of Xingcheng swimwear entrepreneurs, further elevated the industry's prominence. This, in turn, spurred business activity, with new customers placing orders and negotiating deals. Visitors from across the country flocked to the Northeast Asia (Xingcheng) International Swimwear Expo in July that year.

Contracts and transactions valued at 1 billion yuan (\$138 million) were signed and made at the expo, which attracted 830 cloud exhibitors from both domestic and international markets, alongside over 100 offline exhibitors. The expo, now in its 14th year, continues to elevate the city's international reputation for swimwear. **BR**

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Dive Into DeepSeek

The multifaceted use of DeepSeek among Chinese youth By Lu Yan

For Xie Hui, a 30-year-old professional in Beijing, getting a good night's sleep can sometimes be a struggle. With thoughts about career choices, relationship challenges and other pressures of adult life swirling in her mind, peace at bedtime is often elusive. When talking to friends or family is not convenient, Xie has turned to artificial intelligence (AI) tools for comfort—especially since the launch earlier this year of Chinese AI startup DeepSeek's chatbot app, which has quickly become popular in the AI landscape.

"It's reassuring to know that I can express my feelings without fear of judgment. It's not a replacement for real conversations, but it definitely helps me feel less alone in navigating life's challenges," Xie told *Beijing Review*. She added that this open and free mode of communication made her more willing to express her true feelings, helping her uncover the root causes of her problems.

The trend of reaching out to AI for support is gaining momentum among young adults in China. Many have shared their experiences online, highlighting how the technology has provided unique and valuable insights for navigating the complexities of modern life. Increasingly, young people are turning to DeepSeek to fulfill a variety of needs, including emotional counseling, future life insights or even lottery number guesses and stock market predictions.

Beyond merely addressing issues, Chinese youth are exploring AI for fun and entertainment as well. They engage with AI chatbots to uncover creative insights, generate playful content and enjoy interactive experiences. By offering both assistance and enjoyment, AI is valued as a tool that helps them live their lives more fully.

Emotional comfort

From relationships to careers and social interactions, young people are increasingly turning to AI chat tools like DeepSeek for advice and console.

For example, when Xie asked the app what to do about her work pressure, it encouraged her to analyze the reasons behind her stress, suggesting that she might be "someone with high self-expectations, pursuing work not

only to complete tasks, but also to achieve self-improvement."

After consulting with the AI, she noticed a gradual change in her mindset. In just a few weeks, she learned how to balance work and rest more effectively and gradually became less anxious about work pressure.

Many users are sharing DeepSeek's responses that resonate with them on social media



A shop owner in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, showcases a multilingual promotional video generated by DeepSeek and other artificial intelligence tools on February 25

platforms like Xiaohongshu (RedNote). When asked how to cope with emotional pain, the app has offered insights like, “The fact that you can feel pain shows you have a strong capacity for self-reflection, which is quite rare,” and “You don’t need to handle every emotion perfectly. What’s important is not to let the fear of sadness take away your right to choose your future. You’re more resilient than you think, and true love shouldn’t keep you in self-doubt for long.”

“I never expected to receive such comforting responses when talking to an AI,” Xie said, reflecting the sentiments of many young people who have found solace in technology.

Shanghai-based psychologist Wu Sihui believes that while AI can provide helpful support, it lacks the human qualities essential for effective counseling. “For example, counseling involves complex communication, including non-verbal cues and the subtleties of tone and body language, which AI cannot fully grasp,” Wu told *Beijing Review*.

“Despite its limitations, I do think AI can provide clients with immediate access to information and coping strategies, serving as a supplementary tool alongside traditional therapy,” Wu added.

In addition to using DeepSeek as a trusted confidant, more and more young people are turning to the chatbot for tips to find their “ideal partner.” The app analyzes users’ strengths and weaknesses in dating, identifies target demographics, suggests strategies for engagement, provides relationship-building techniques, and offers risk management suggestions, and even presents a detailed timeline for execution.

Though young people appreciate AI as a powerful relationship advisor, Wu offered some cautionary notes.

“While using DeepSeek for matchmaking can help people avoid certain risks and offer valuable advice, outdated data and limited information could trap users in a narrow mindset filled with stereotypes,” Wu said.

Financial advisor?

DeepSeek’s rise has ignited an “AI gold rush” online, where people are exploring new ways to earn extra money in lottery or stock market. Many who have tried DeepSeek believe that it can employ sophisticated algorithms to analyze vast amounts of data and identify patterns that may not be immediately visible to the human eye. By processing historical records, user-generated inputs, and real-time market data, DeepSeek offers insights that help users make more informed investment choices.

Some users also shared AI’s suggestions on winning lottery numbers. The hashtag “Won the lottery using DeepSeek” surged to the top of trending topics on China’s social media platform Weibo on February 11, sparking widespread discussion among netizens eager to learn more about this AI-driven approach.

However, the following day, China Sports Lottery published an article on its social media account cautioning against the notion that AI can predict winning lottery numbers. “Each draw is independent, and the winning numbers are generated randomly, making predictions impossible,” the article stated.

The account further emphasized, “Using AI to choose numbers is essentially the same as using a random selection; both methods generate a set of numbers randomly, and the odds of winning are the same as if we chose the numbers ourselves. Anyone claiming that AI can predict winning numbers is misleading.”



Posts on social media platform Xiaohongshu (RedNote) show users asking DeepSeek for mental health advice

Financial commentator Guo Shiliang has utilized DeepSeek to analyze industry investment opportunities and individual stocks. He points out that the model sometimes expresses opinions cautiously and often recommends multiple companies within the same sector.

“If it only recommends a single company’s stock, it could mislead investors. The design of the model takes such risks into account, emphasizing the importance of careful interpretation of its insights,” Guo told *Beijing Daily* newspaper. “While DeepSeek’s advice on stock trading and lottery buying can be regarded as a reference, it should not be overly relied upon.” **BR**

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Comments to luyan@qicgamerica.com

The Power of Experience

Immersive, hands-on classes boost brick-and-mortar businesses By Zhang Yage

Imagine paying just 9.9 yuan (\$1.36) for a 40-minute to 1-hour class that allows you to explore a range of skills. How many would you take? For Chen Sisi, a Beijing resident in her 30s, the answer is “10.” Over the past two weeks, she has embraced her newfound passion for experience classes, seizing the opportunity to fill her weekends with affordable learning.

“At first, I only intended to sign up for a Traditional Chinese Medicine massage class to help my mother with her arthritis,” Chen told *Beijing Review*. “But I found these classes to be both affordable and fascinating, so I ended up enrolling in 10 different ones.”

Chen’s experience classes span an impressive array of skills and hobbies, including baking, home economics, household appliance maintenance, traditional tea ceremonies, film processing, flower arranging, latte art, indoor bungee, skateboarding and Japanese anime studies. She noted that experience classes have become her preferred form of entertainment, replacing shopping.

Experience classes appeal to many young people like Chen. Data from online service platform Meituan indicate that from July to September 2024, the search volume for “experience classes” surged by 364 percent month on month. In addition, interest in such classes has also been influenced by current events; for example, interest in tennis experience classes surged by 48 percent after the golden success of tennis player Zheng Qinwen at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games last summer.

Thousands of vloggers on super popular lifestyle and e-commerce app Xiaohongshu (RedNote) are now regularly attending experience classes and sharing their progress, sparking discussion among their followers.

Affordable learning

Chen attributed the success of experience classes to their cost-effectiveness.

“If I were to sign up for a ‘formal’ program for any of the skills I’ve tried, it could cost over 100 yuan (\$13.73) per hour. At 9.9 yuan, it’s an opportunity that anyone can afford,” she said.

“I think experience classes not only help young people save money but also promote environmental sustainability and green consumption. In my 20s, I was passionate about two different hobbies. If I’d had access to these experience classes back then, I wouldn’t have wasted money on expensive learning materials,” Chen added.

Wang Yunfei, an associate professor at the School of Sociology and Politics at Anhui University, told China News Service that low-priced experience classes cater to young people’s desire to maximize their limited free time while exploring new interests outside their daily routines.

Chen Xu, a researcher at the Economics Research Institute of the Shaanxi Academy of Social Sciences, underscored that the rise of experience classes reflects young consumers’ needs to alleviate physical and mental stress while diversifying their life experiences through affordable means.

“Experience classes attract many young consumers quickly because the ‘try



before you buy’ model reduces the risk of costly mistakes. This approach expands leisure options for consumers and helps businesses reach target demographics, creating a win-win scenario,” Chen Xu told local media.

“Experience classes are an essential part of our marketing strategy. Since January, I have hosted over 200 yoga and Pilates group classes, and more than 10 percent of customers have opted for more ‘formal’ sessions, with some even becoming gym members,” Li Xinrui, a fitness center manager in Beijing, told *Beijing Review*.

“The popularity of our experience classes has also attracted partnerships with local businesses, such as restaurants in the mall [where the gym is located], which offer coupons to our participants, benefiting all parties involved,” Li added.

Chen Xu elaborated that once businesses attract customers through experience classes, they should focus on converting these participants into long-term clients by fostering strong connections and building brand loyalty.

“Business owners should leverage experience classes to transform foot traffic into retained users,” the researcher said.

Supervision and regulation

While experience classes offer mutual benefits for class takers and instructors, some learners have reported somewhat uncomfortable experiences, highlighting the importance of setting rules for these classes.

On Dianping, a popular Chinese review and recommendation platform, these

low-cost classes are often limited to first-time customers.

Participants must make an appointment with the offerer of a class prior to arrival and can usually only attend one session. Additionally, some class offers impose restrictions on when the classes can be taken, such as weekdays only. Many classes are conducted in a “group session” format, and without careful reading of the rules, students may be disappointed with their experiences.

According to data from BLACK CAT Complaints, one of China’s largest online consumer rights protection platforms, complaints about experience classes have exceeded



Students take a paper cutting class at an art center in Tianjin on April 28, 2024

10,000. The primary issues reported include “reduced services,” “hard selling” and “false advertising.”

“I took a make-up skills experience class last week, and I ended up listening to the teacher bragging about their cosmetics products for half an hour,” a customer surnamed Wu from Shanghai told *Beijing Review*. “I wouldn’t mind buying the products if I found them effective, but I’m exhausted by the constant sales pitch.”

Wang Yanni, a lawyer with Beijing Yingke Law Firm, emphasized the need for sales platforms to establish quality standards to protect consumers from poor experiences, such as hard selling and unqualified instructors.

“Class offers should be required to fully disclose any potential fees upfront in their course descriptions to avoid misleading practices like ‘additional payments’ and ‘forced upgrades.’ Furthermore, excessive marketing tactics should be prohibited, and merchants must not coerce consumers into purchasing long-term courses through exaggerated promotions or emotional manipulation,” she stated in an interview with newspaper *Legal Daily*.

In cases of unfair contractual clauses, consumers can claim their invalidity. For instances of false advertising or forced consumption, consumers have the right to file complaints with market supervision departments and request refunds or compensation, Hu Qinyan, a lawyer from Yinghe Law Firm in Beijing, told *Legal Daily*. “However, many consumers opt not to pursue complaints due to the low cost of the classes and the relatively high expenses involved in enforcing their rights. This reluctance can lead to further violations in the market,” Hu added.

Government departments have noticed these phenomena and begun to step in. The Jiangsu Provincial Consumer Rights Protection Committee recently issued a document on its official website, recommending that sales platforms ensure class offers meet training qualifications before offering experience classes. Additionally, these platforms should improve their evaluation mechanisms by opening up more user feedback channels, so as to safeguard their rights.

“Moreover, market supervision departments need to fulfill their responsibilities by strengthening oversight against violations such as false advertising, hidden charges and hard selling to protect consumers’ legitimate rights and interests.” Chen Xu said. **BR**

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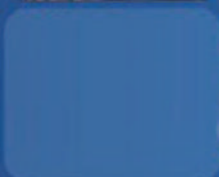
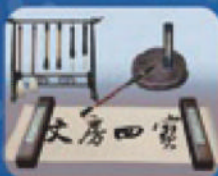
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CHINA MOSAIC

Weekly video commentary direct from Beijing

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Olympic Odyssey

President of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach visited the Beijing Olympic Museum on February 20. After the tour, he said, “It’s great to be back here in the Olympic Museum and to revive so many fond memories of Beijing 2022 and also Beijing 2008. These were two truly exceptional Olympic Games China offered to the world.”

The Beijing Olympic Museum is located in the heart of Beijing Olympic Park, just south of the iconic National Stadium, known as the “Bird’s Nest.” The museum’s main hall features 1,394 exhibits, along with an extensive collection of pictures and videos. It highlights China’s endeavors to bid for, prepare for and

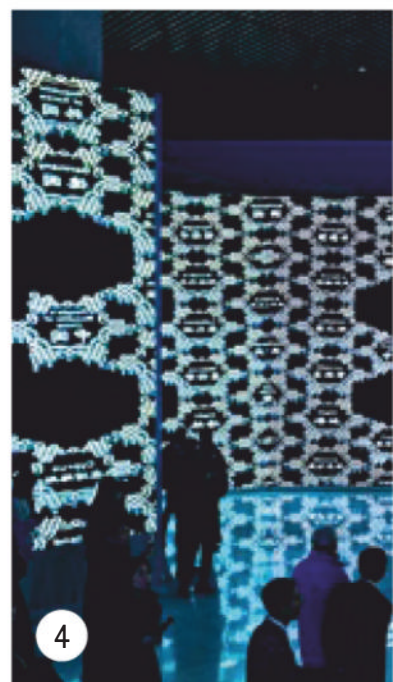
host both the 2008 Olympic Summer Games and the 2022 Olympic Winter Games.

Bach pointed out that the Beijing Olympic Museum is not only a place to preserve Olympic heritage, but also an interactive space that can awaken the Olympic spirit.

He wrote in the museum’s guestbook: “Thank you very much to the Beijing Olympic Museum for keeping the Olympic Spirit alive and inspiring all generations of Chinese people.” **BR**

(Text and photos by Wei Yao)

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1. President of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach looks at the Beijing 2022 torch through an augmented reality screen
2. A limited-edition Bing Dwen Dwen, mascot of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games, created in honor of the Year of the Snake, which began on January 29
3. Ice activity-themed badges, first introduced during the Beijing 2022 Olympics, highlight the history of winter sports in Beijing
4. Visitors watch a video of the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Olympics inside the Beijing Olympic Museum's multimedia exhibition hall on February 20

Finding Home in Xinjiang

By Luke Johnston



A snowboarder jumps through a ring of fire during a ski jumping event at the Jiangjun Mountain International Ski Resort in Altay Prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on January 29

I have long believed in the soft hum of destiny—a gentle yet persistent voice that calls us to parts unknown. In 2021, that melodic invitation first led me to Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, a land so vast it joins deserts and grasslands, mountains and skyscrapers, all within a single, breathtaking sweep.

On my very first day, I set out to interview some Uygur locals for a social media video, hoping to unearth the genuine spirit of Xinjiang. Spotting a group of carefree young folk, covered with tattoos, sipping beer, I felt a little unease—would they be wary of foreigners here in Xinjiang after all the bad press from abroad?

As I approached them, it turned out the surprise was all theirs: They exclaimed that I was the first foreigner they had ever met. Laughter soon replaced my nerves, and in a jumble of my broken Chinese and their equally imperfect English, we chatted like old friends who simply hadn't met yet. They insisted on buying me a drink, then generously invited me into their home—an offer I might have hesitated to accept in my own country, where trusting strangers doesn't

come so easily. Yet in that moment, hospitality felt natural, even inevitable, and I realized how quickly Xinjiang was shattering my preconceptions.

They welcomed me in, poured steaming tea from ornate pots and laid out a spread of local dishes. This was no ordinary meal. It was an initiation, a baptism by kindness, as if they were saying, “You are here, so you are family now.” That day, I learned that here in Xinjiang, food and affection go hand in hand—and how easily hearts could open at the sight of a curious stranger.

I left Xinjiang after some days, but two years later—in 2023, and again in 2024—I made my way back like a migrating bird returning to warmer climes. Each time, although in different cities, from Kashgar, capital of Kashgar Prefecture, to Yining, capital of Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, the same warmth greeted me, people inviting me to their homes. Perhaps that is how Xinjiang welcomes wanderers—it gives them its heart so fully that they leave a part of themselves behind, ensuring they must return. So it is because of this, I decided to begin a new chapter in my life in Xinjiang.

Being here, there is so much to explore. I'll truly never be bored. Xinjiang is seven times bigger than my own country, the United Kingdom. Indeed, I have roamed only a fraction of the region, because no matter how many times I return, there remain hidden valleys, scorching deserts and snowy altitudes yet to explore. From Turpan, one of the hottest places in China, to snowy Altay, where you can imagine yourself in the Alps, with ski slopes galore. The grasslands of Ili were also a wonder, with many Kazak nomads living and traveling in the mountains in their yurts, herding their livestock along the way.

As someone who is about to graduate with a Ph.D. in artificial intelligence (AI) from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, people often ask me, “Why Xinjiang? Wouldn't Beijing or Shanghai be more logical hubs for tech?” But I see beyond the immediate. I look toward the future, imagining how AI might knit together the region's myriad cultures and landscapes. Xinjiang, in particular the city of Karamay, has already begun to explore that path.

Known historically for its oil production, Karamay in north Xinjiang is leaping beyond its past and into a new era powered by state-of-the-art data centers. Many might not be aware, but China's DeepSeek, a Hangzhou-based tech company that recently created an impressive AI open-source large language model, shocking the world, collaborated with Karamay to accomplish this.

So here I am, back in Xinjiang for another chapter. This is a place of open doors, whether in the humble houses that greet you with tea, or in the advanced data centers that pave the way for the future. This is how I came to Xinjiang and why I stay: As I explore this place, I am uncovering aspects of myself that I never knew existed. **BR**

The author is a British YouTube content creator currently living in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region
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